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President: Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral .... (Portugal)

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Agenda item 42

Question of Palestine

Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/50/35)

Report of the Secretary-General (A/50/725)

The President: I should like to propose that the list of speakers in the debate on this item be closed at 4.30 p.m. today.

It was so decided.

The President: I therefore request those representatives wishing to participate in the debate to inscribe their names on the list of speakers as soon as possible.

I now call upon His Excellency Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé of Senegal, in his capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

Mr. Cissé (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (*interpretation from French*): It is an honour for me to introduce the agenda item on the question of Palestine in my capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

This year, the United Nations celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. On that historic occasion, the leaders of the whole world solemnly reaffirmed the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and their commitment to them. They expressed their determination that the United Nations will work with renewed vigour and effectiveness in promoting peace, development, equality and justice and understanding among the peoples of the world. They also reaffirmed the inalienable right of all peoples to self-determination, with particular attention to the situation of peoples under colonial or other forms of domination or foreign occupation.

The question of Palestine is the oldest conflict on the United Nations agenda, for the Organization has been concerned with it practically since its inception, it has provoked several wars in the region of the Middle East and over the years it has been the source of countless sufferings and loss of human life. The Assembly has repeatedly reaffirmed that so long as this question has not been resolved in all its aspects in a satisfactory manner and in accordance with international norms it will remain the United Nations responsibility.

Our Committee, established 20 years ago with the mandate of recommending a solution to the Palestinian problem, is convinced that a comprehensive, just and lasting solution of the question of Palestine must be based

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on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), on the principle of the withdrawal of Israel from all Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, and from the other occupied Arab territories, on respect for the right of all States in the region to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized boundaries, and on the recognition and exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, primarily the right to self-determination, rights which must be guaranteed them. Those are basic principles that have been overwhelmingly endorsed by the international community and without which there can no lasting solution to this question.

The positive developments of the past few years since the beginning of the peace process at Madrid in 1991 has created a new climate in the relations among the parties and altered the realities on the ground, clearly mapping the path in the right direction. Despite the tragic event of 4 November of this year when an assassin's bullet ended the life of Israel's Prime Minister, Mr. Yitzhak Rabin, to whom we owe a large measure of the progress that has been made, it is our fervent hope that that act of violence will not lead to a setback in the peace process and that progress towards implementation of the agreements will continue. The Committee welcomed the statement by Israel's new Prime Minister, Mr. Shimon Peres, that the tragedy will have no adverse effect on the peace process to which Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization are committed. The outpouring of support by the international community, as well as by Israeli public opinion, clearly shows that the path on which the parties are engaged is the correct one and that they must persevere.

Notwithstanding the concerns created by the unstable situation on the ground, the Committee rejoices with the international community at the progress that was made in the negotiations over the past year, and especially at the signing at Washington, D.C. on 28 September 1995 of the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. That document supersedes all previous agreements on the implementation of the Declaration of Principles and provides for further withdrawals of Israeli forces, Palestinian elections and the assumption by the Palestinian Authority of various responsibilities in the West Bank, as well as for the gradual release of Palestinian prisoners and for cooperation and greater dialogue and mutual understanding among the parties.

The Committee hopes that this agreement represents the beginning of a new stage in which the Palestinian people will be able to move closer to the exercise of their inalienable rights to self-determination and sovereignty in their homeland and that both the letter and the spirit of the agreement will be implemented, thereby contributing to the establishment of a just and comprehensive peace. The Committee is committed to continue and intensify its support for the Palestinian people and their leadership during the transitional period and urges the international community to continue to do its utmost in this regard.

In this connection we welcome the initiatives — exemplified by the Second Middle East/North Africa Economic Summit held at Amman in October 1995 under the aegis of His Majesty King Hussein of Jordan — being made to facilitate the expansion of investment in the region and enhance regional cooperation and regional development, thereby promoting stability and an atmosphere conducive to peace.

The Committee also wishes to express its appreciation to the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, and his Representative in the occupied territories for having pursued their endeavours to coordinate assistance to the Palestinian people, which is beginning to bear fruit in a number of positive ways. The efforts of the donor community and United Nations bodies, especially the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, also must be noted.

For its part, the Committee, mindful of its mandate to contribute to the effective implementation of the agreements reached and to promote solidarity with and assistance to the Palestinian people, organized a number of productive seminars, meetings of non-governmental organizations and symposiums in 1995. The Committee is particularly grateful to Brazil for having acted as host last March at Rio de Janeiro to the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Seminar and the Latin American and Caribbean NGO Symposium, and to the French Government for its help in organizing the Seminar on Palestinian Administrative, Managerial and Financial Needs and Challenges at the Headquarters of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) at Paris in June. The Committee also held a North American Regional NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine at New York and a European NGO Symposium and International NGO Meeting on the Question of Palestine at Vienna.

Participating in these various events were prominent Palestinian and Israeli personalities, experts from various regions, representatives of donor countries and of other governmental and intergovernmental entities, agencies of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations having some involvement with the Palestinian people. This showed that the Committee can play a valuable role as a forum for dialogue, exchange of information, mobilization of public opinion and action for peace, for the Palestinian people's exercise of its rights and for Palestinian socio-economic development.

Our Committee believes that, as the peace process advances, it must be accompanied by a considerable effort on the part of the international community to solve the various critical problems of the transition period, including unresolved political questions, such as the settlements, Jerusalem, the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the Palestinian socio-economic situation.

In carrying out the clear political mandate given to it by the General Assembly, the Committee will continue to make adjustments in its programme of work to reflect the new realities in the region and make a useful contribution to the international community's efforts to bring about a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement of the question of Palestine, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions. In its endeavours the Committee will continue to rely on the assistance of the Division for Palestinian Rights of the United Nations Secretariat, whose contribution in monitoring, research, publications and the holding of seminars and meetings for non-governmental organizations has been particularly important and useful.

The Committee considers that, along with the Division for Palestinian Rights and the Department of Public Information, each in its own domain, it will continue to provide the necessary support for the United Nations in the exercise of its responsibility with regard to this question, until the peace process finally reaches its conclusion.

The Committee hopes that the States that support its objectives but have not yet participated in its work will consider doing so in order to enhance the contributions of the United Nations to the development of peace at this important stage.

The President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Joseph Cassar of Malta, Rapporteur of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to introduce the Committee's report (A/50/35).

Mr. Cassar (Malta), Rapporteur of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People: It is a pleasure for me, in my capacity as Rapporteur, to present to the General Assembly the report (A/50/35) of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People covering its work in 1995.

During the past year, the Committee has carried out its work on the basis of its mandate as determined by the resolutions of the General Assembly. The report covers important developments concerning the question of Palestine, the peace process and the activities of the Committee during the past year.

The introduction to the report is contained in chapter I, which indicates briefly the Committee's objectives and perspectives during the year. Chapters II and III are procedural and summarize the respective mandates of the Committee, the Division for Palestinian Rights and the Department of Public Information and give information on the Committee's programme of work. Chapter IV reviews the situation relating to the question of Palestine.

The Committee was encouraged that during the past year the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations have proceeded despite repeated delays and acts of violence which have taken many innocent victims on both sides and aroused the concern of the international community. In his statement, the Chairman of the Committee has already had the opportunity to transmit to this Assembly the feeling of the Committee in this respect.

On 27 August 1995, the parties signed at Cairo the Protocol on Further Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities. On 28 September 1995, the parties signed, in Washington, D.C., the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which supersedes all earlier agreements in the implementation of the Declaration of Principles. The Agreement reaffirms the parties' understanding that the interim self-government arrangements provided therein are an integral part of the whole peace process and that the negotiations on the permanent status, which will start no later than 4 May 1996, will lead to the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). The Committee welcomed these agreements and is determined to continue to support the Palestinian people and its leadership during the transitional period.

Despite these positive developments, the Committee noted that the situation in the areas still under Israeli occupation gave reason for concern and continued to create facts on the ground which had potential negative effects for the future exercise of Palestinian rights and the peace process. The Committee also voiced its concern at the continued problems relative to the living conditions of Palestinians, in particular in the Gaza Strip.

Chapter V of the report provides a detailed overview of the various activities of the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights, in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 49/62 A and B. The Committee closely monitored the situation on the ground, and the Chairman addressed a letter to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council on the issue of the expansion and consolidation of settlements by the Israeli Government in the occupied territories. The Chairman also represented the Committee at the meetings of the Security Council on the same issue, as well as at meetings of various intergovernmental organizations. Furthermore, the Committee followed closely, and some of its members participated in, meetings of United Nations bodies and agencies, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and intergovernmental organizations, at which various statements, resolutions and communiqués relevant to these issues were adopted.

As the Chairman has already stated, during 1995 the Committee sponsored a Latin American and Caribbean Seminar and a European Seminar on Palestinian Administrative, Managerial and Financial Needs and Challenges; jointly with the Seminar, a Latin American and Caribbean Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Symposium; an NGO Symposium for the North American region; and the combined United Nations International NGO Meeting/European NGO Symposium on the question of Palestine.

Finally, the report describes very briefly the many activities of the Division for Palestinian Rights of the United Nations Secretariat in the fields of research, monitoring and publications and in connection with a computer-based information system on the question of Palestine. It also describes the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

Chapter VI covers the work of the Department of Public Information in accordance with resolution 49/62 C, including the publications and audio-visual activities of that Department, as well as the journalists' encounters and new missions to the area.

Chapter VII, the last Chapter, contains the recommendations of the Committee.

The Committee reaffirms that the United Nations has a permanent responsibility with respect to the question of Palestine until a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement is reached, and that its own role continues to be useful and necessary during the transitional period. The Committee also reaffirms the basic principles on which the settlement of the question must be based, and calls on the Assembly to reaffirm its mandate with overwhelming support. The Committee also considers that a broadening of its membership to include countries that support its objectives but have not hitherto participated in its work would greatly enhance the contribution of the United Nations to promote peace at this important stage.

The Committee considers that its seminars on economic and social issues confronting the Palestinian people in the occupied territory have been particularly useful in bringing together experts in the relevant fields, including Palestinians and Israelis as well as donor countries, United Nations departments, agencies and organizations, and non-governmental organizations active in the field. The Committee has expressed its intention to continue its efforts in this respect, and believes that an event under its auspices should be held in the territory under the Palestinian Authority to address various aspects of the transition period.

The Committee has stressed its role in bringing together and developing a network of non-governmental organizations interested in the question of Palestine and in promoting solidarity activities, as well as concrete assistance. The Committee has expressed its intention to continue to promote the positive contribution of non-governmental organizations, and to continue its programme of meetings of such organizations, in cooperation with their coordinating committees, with a view to developing an effective and broad-based network of non-governmental organizations.

The Committee has emphasized the essential contribution of the Division for Palestinian Rights as a centre for research, monitoring, the preparation of studies and the collection and dissemination of information on all issues related to the question of Palestine, and has requested the Division to continue its activities in this regard, including those related to the computer-based information system on the question of Palestine (UNISPAL). The Committee has also requested the Secretary-General to maintain the political structure and composition of the Division in accordance with the mandate of the General Assembly, and to continue to provide it with the necessary resources.

The Committee considers that the Special Information Programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information continues to be very useful in raising the awareness of the international community and in contributing to an atmosphere conducive to peace, and requests that the programme reflect the new experiences of the Palestinian people and provide assistance in the field of Palestinian media development.

In conclusion, the Committee has expressed its intention to continue to strive to achieve maximum effectiveness in the implementation of its mandate and to adjust its programme in the light of developments, in order to continue to contribute, to the extent possible, to the realization of the common United Nations objective of achieving a just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine.

The President: In accordance with General Assembly resolutions 3237 (XXIX) of 22 November 1974 and 43/177 of 15 December 1988, I now call on the head of the Observer delegation of Palestine.

Mr. Kaddoumi (Palestine) *(interpretation from Arabic):* It gives me pleasure, at the outset, to congratulate you on your election to the presidency of the fiftieth session of the General Assembly. We have great faith in your sagacity and your ability to conduct successfully the work of this historic session of the General Assembly.

It also gives me pleasure to greet, through you, your country, Portugal that has always been a friend of the Palestinian people.

I should like also to pay tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Amara Essy, who presided over the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly. My thanks and greetings go also to the members of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and, in particular, to its Chairman, Ambassador Kéba Birane Cissé. We also deeply appreciate the efforts of the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, in the service of the peace process.

Fifty years have passed since the establishment of the United Nations — years full of problems, of issues, of events and of incidents — which have witnessed the solution of many conflicts, have contributed to the defusing of many war situations and have witnessed strides in the areas of development, rehabilitation and the upholding of human rights while the Palestinian question remained a permanent item on the Organization's agenda.

The Palestinian question has gone through very tense periods, has witnessed many wars that claimed tens of thousands of victims.

Recently, the peace process was launched in the region. The Madrid Conference was convened on the initiative of President Bush. The Palestinian people felt optimistic because of this initiative. They saw at last a glimmer of hope that they may be able to return to their land — Palestine — and looked forward to sovereignty and stability on their own land, in their own homeland. They became hopeful that their life as refugees would come to an end and that the end of their trials and tribulations was at hand.

After very difficult negotiations, the first agreement was signed with Israel in 1993 in Oslo and was followed by other agreements. Then began the implementation of those agreements. Unfortunately, however, Israel did not respect the texts of the agreements nor did it abide by the dates set for their implementation.

In fact, Israel declared that there was nothing sacred about dates or appointed time-frames and thus the process faltered and became plagued with prevarication. It became stalled on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks. On the Palestinian-Israeli track there has been a great deal of bloodshed, in Hebron and in other Palestinian cities. All this has caused people to lose hope in ever achieving the promised comprehensive just political solution. The rulers of Israel, meanwhile, continued to use the question of security in justifying their prevarication, their hesitation in implementing the agreements and their disregard for the texts, their meaning and their time-frames. By contrast, Palestinian commitment has shown that we have no intention of playing into Israel's hand. Then came the tragic assassination of the Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin — proof of the fact that terrorism has grown and developed in an Israeli climate that has been nurtured by Israeli parties. It is to be remembered that the Israeli Mossad has in past years assassinated several Palestinian leaders.

If we make mention of such facts and incidents, it is only to show that the difficulties faced by the Middle East peace process stem from the racist upbringing and repressive practices espoused by the extremist organizations and political parties in Israel.

The Palestinian people want peace. They are a people that needs peace more than any other nation on earth after 48 years of displacement and life in refugee camps. No one should ever doubt this. When the Madrid peace conference was convened, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians rejoiced, marched in peaceful demonstrations and put olive branches in the muzzles of Israeli guns in order to express their ardent desire for peace. However, when the negotiations faltered, when agreements were brushed aside, when corridors were repeatedly closed, when the policy of starving the Palestinians was pursued together with the policy of land expropriation, and building of settlements, when the agreement about Al-Quds was abrogated and the city was declared the eternal unified capital of Israel, together with the decision of the late Yitzhak Rabin to confiscate 53 hectares of neighbouring land, our Palestinian people lost much of their hope in a just and comprehensive settlement.

Our question today is as follows: will the conscience of humanity ever awaken? Will the leaders of Israel and its parties finally become convinced that peace is essential for them as well as for others? Will they realize that such peace will be achieved only through the search for a comprehensive and just solution that would guarantee the withdrawal of Israel from all the Arab- and Palestinian-occupied territories, including Al-Quds, in keeping with the resolutions of international legality and in response to the need to entrench the principles of peaceful coexistence on a basis of balanced interests between the parties concerned.

Israel's might and dominance at this point in time seem to have clouded its view of the future implications of the present changes in the international situation. This seems to have entrenched in Israeli minds concepts that are not in keeping with the behests of peace and security for all, for Israel as well as for its Arab neighbours. What seems to have become entrenched in those minds is the logic of force and the use of violence in imposing the solution such minds see as appropriate for the Middle East crisis.

Since the end of the Second World War the peoples and States of the world have striven for freedom and independence. The Charter of the United Nations has affirmed the right of peoples to self-determination. However, certain small peoples have not yet gained their freedom and independence and are still languishing under the yoke of foreign hegemony. Our Palestinian people are a case in point. Despite the many resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council calling for the withdrawal of Israel and reaffirming the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, the Palestinian people still languish under Israeli occupation.

The problem of the Palestinian refugees is at the very heart of the Palestinian question. Peace in the Middle East cannot become a reality without the return of the Palestinian refugees to their homes to live in peace with their neighbours. The right to return was recognized in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and in the Declaration of Human Rights, and the United Nations must see to it that those principles are respected, in keeping with its Charter.

The position adopted recently by the United States has caused the Palestinian people much concern. The American Government has always been the first to affirm General Assembly resolution 194 (III) on the return of the Palestinian refugees, but recently it has appeared to be denying it. The American Congress has decided, a few days ago, to transfer the American embassy to Al-Quds and thus has contravened Security Council resolutions, complicated further the peace process between the PLO and Israel, and went against the Declaration of Principles signed on 13 September 1993 in Washington, which Declaration called for the return of the persons displaced in 1967 and for the setting up of a committee of the PLO, Israel, Egypt and Jordan to look into the ways and means of implementing this return, in keeping with Security Council resolution 237 (1967).

The Palestinian problem is at the very heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict. A comprehensive and just peace cannot become a reality without a just solution to that problem. It is our belief that the United Nations has an abiding responsibility to continue to search for a just solution to the problem of the Palestinian refugees, on the basis of internationally recognized rights. We call on the General Assembly to reaffirm those rights and to maintain the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), so that it may continue to discharge its responsibilities and carry out its duties towards the Palestinian refugees. We also call upon all States Members to continue to make their contributions to UNRWA's budget so that the Agency may continue to do its work.

The Oslo Declaration of Principles underscored the need for the holding of democratic elections in the course of the transitional period and affirmed the right of the displaced Palestinian people who were forced out of Palestinian territories in 1967 to return and to exercise their rights both as electors and as candidates. None the less, Israel continues to refuse the return of those people who number more than 750,000 Palestinian citizens and thereby deprives them of exercising their civil rights. Israel also continues to hold thousands of Palestinian people prisoners in its jails and refuses to set them free in order to exercise those rights. Israel also refuses to implement the withdrawal and redeployment of its forces from all the towns, villages and Palestinian camps, and continues to keep the city of Hebron under siege. So, is it really possible to stage such democratic elections under conditions of Israeli occupation and continuing siege?

We agreed to the peace initiative proposed by the former American President, Mr. George Bush, in 1991, as it called for the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which stipulate the withdrawal by the Israeli forces from all the occupied Arab and Palestinian territories, including the city of Al-Quds, in line with the land-for-peace principle. Israel, however, continues to prevaricate. It even refuses to abide by the very basics of settlement as set out in the agreements that have been concluded. Instead, Israel is trying to impose its own views and its own interpretation of the texts of the agreements. In the end, it has resorted to brushing aside those texts and, in their place, it has started presenting the Palestinian negotiators with the measures it deems appropriate for implementing the agreements. Israel has not respected neither the texts nor the agreed dates in those agreements. It is intent on entrenching its occupation of the Palestinian territories in different forms, not to mention the failure to achieve any progress on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks, which have continued to falter since the beginning of the peace process in 1991, because of Israel's intransigence. The United States of America has deployed outstanding efforts, but the Israeli Government has persisted in its posture and has continued to put forward partial solutions on those two tracks, as has been the case with regard to the Palestinian track. It is a known fact that Israel still occupies Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese territories, from which it should withdraw if it really wants peace. The Jordanian track has not been too complicated, because the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) had undertaken the task of negotiating with regard to the Palestinian West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

As we can see no progress worth mentioning has been achieved on those three Arab tracks, despite the agreements concluded between the Palestinians and the Israelis. Those agreements stipulated a transitional period as a test of intentions for both parties and of the possibility of making progress on that track. However, Israel has portrayed the transitional period as a limited stage of self-government, a concept we had already rejected from the very start, in the days of the previous American administration, because self-government only applies to minorities and we, with our numbers, are the majority — unless, of course, Israel wishes to limit its recognition of the Palestinian people to those who now live on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip, and thus to ignore three and a half million Palestinians who live outside the Palestinian territories as refugees and as displaced persons.

The Palestinian question cannot be confined to the early transfer of competence from the civilian and military Israeli authorities to the Palestinian Authority. The Palestinian question, at its very core, is first and foremost about the return of the refugees and of the displaced persons, the removal of the Israeli settlements from the Palestinian territories, which now number 142 settlements, 124 of which are in the West Bank, and 18 in the Gaza Strip, the return of east Jerusalem to Palestinian sovereignty, the exercise by the Palestinian people of its sovereignty on its territory, the freeing of the thousands of Palestinians held in Israeli jails, the removal of Israeli control from the corridors so that the Palestinian citizens may enjoy freedom of movement in their homeland without need for Israeli passes, the freedom of importation and exportation without Israeli control and our full control over our natural resources, our central institutions — such as electricity, ports, airports, telephones. None of this has been accomplished so far.

We believe that free and democratic elections under international supervision must lead to the establishment of an independent Palestinian State, as we have just heard this morning from the President of the General Assembly, in keeping with resolution 181 (II) which established two States, the resolution which, in fact, was the birth certificate of Israel, and on the force of which the United Nations recognized Israel as a Member State. Now the United Nations, in keeping with its own resolution, has to recognize the Palestinian State whose establishment was declared in the Palestinian Parliament in exile, in 1988, in Algeria, and which has been recognized by many States throughout the world.

We are for a just and comprehensive peace. Ever since the Madrid peace conference, we have spared no effort in trying to achieve that very peace. We have made many concessions in the hope that the Israeli party would recognize our sincere desire for peaceful coexistence with the Israeli people on an equal footing, away from hegemony and domination and away from expansionist ambitions. However, Israel's rulers still ignore these facts and use the pretext of Israeli security in justifying their prevarication in implementing the resolutions of international legality and their failure to honour the commitment to achieve settlement on the basis of the principle of land for peace.

Israel still refuses to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) so that its nuclear weapons may continue to threaten security and stability in the region and continues to refuse to submit its nuclear installations to United Nations inspection. This posture on the part of Israel is a source of doubts and suspicions with regard to Israel's intentions. Furthermore, the United States of America continues to supply Israel with the most sophisticated of advanced weapons. This imbalance of power must, as of necessity, hamper the peace process and, unless the problem is resolved, it will be impossible to establish regional economic development programmes or to promote economic cooperation. Peace cannot become a reality in the Middle East so long as those weapons of mass destruction continue to exist in the region.

Balance of power and of interests in the Middle East is the primary prerequisite for the establishment of a just and comprehensive peace. In this context, we should like to affirm here the need to maintain the unity of Iraq and its territorial integrity and the need to find the necessary means of putting an end to the suffering of its people. We should like also to reaffirm the need to take serious steps to put an end to the unjust embargo imposed on the sister country, Libya.

The United Nations, in its statements on the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary, reaffirmed its intention to save the coming generations from the scourge of war, to encourage the resolution of disputes by peaceful means and to stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons and of all weapons of mass destruction. It reaffirmed the right of all peoples to self-determination and its intention to protect the rights of the original inhabitants and of refugees. We look forward to seeing the application on the ground of these principles so that peace and stability may prevail in the world.

Mr. Yaacobi (Israel): It has been just over three weeks since the assassination of the Prime Minister of Israel, Yitzhak Rabin. Israel lost a beloved leader, a great statesman who initiated a historic change in Israel and the entire Middle East. I personally lost a close friend with whom I had worked for many years. Prime Minister Rabin paid for his commitment to peace with his life.

It is disturbing that there are people — fanatics, radicals and fundamentalists — who resort to murder in an attempt — a vain attempt — to prevent progress. Their goal is not just to murder people, but to murder the hope for a better tomorrow. We will never give in to those who wish to return us to the days of fear, of war, of hate. Israel is determined to continue on the path blazed by our late Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin, and our current Prime Minister, Shimon Peres. Peace is our continuing commitment. We know the risks of peacemaking, but we also know that there is no alternative. Only through peace can we hope to achieve the goals that we have set for ourselves for a better, secure future.

For over two years, Israel and the Palestinians have been on the road to a just and lasting peace. The road has been long and difficult. It takes true leadership on both sides to be successfully navigated. But this is the only road which can serve the peoples of the Middle East. Only with the signing of the Declaration of Principles by Israel and the PLO on 13 September 1993 did the prospects for achieving a lasting peace appear within our grasp. That Declaration set the conditions which will govern our relations for an interim period until a permanent status agreement is reached.

Since that September morning, we have reached several agreements designed to transform the Declaration of Principles from a paper agreement into a framework for working relations between our two peoples. On 4 May 1994, we signed the Gaza-Jericho Agreement, providing for the transfer of responsibilities in the Gaza Strip and Jericho to the Palestinian Authority. Later that year, the Palestinians received responsibilities for their own affairs in several civil spheres throughout the West Bank.

Then, the Oslo B Agreement was signed on 28 September 1995 in Washington. This Agreement provides for: the transfer of power to the Palestinian Authority throughout the West Bank; a redeployment of Israeli troops from the major population centres; and elections for a Palestinian Council. Palestinians throughout the West Bank will conduct their internal affairs. For the first time, Palestinian students will be taught from a curriculum selected by Palestinian educators. For the first time, Palestinian taxes will help to build an infrastructure and a strong, healthy economy. Early next year, residents of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip will participate in the first democratic, free and contested elections in their history.

We hope to initiate a new era in the Middle East — an era characterized by cooperation and peaceful coexistence between Egypt, Jordan, Israel, the Palestinians and others, an era based on dignity and mutual respect, where peace is not some abstract concept, but a daily reality.

May I say very frankly that it was so disappointing to hear the speech of the representative who preceded me on this rostrum just now. He spoke as if nothing had happened, as if we were not making progress, as if Israel had not suffered cruel terrorist attacks by Islamic fundamentalists, as if the agreements signed were not known to him or as if he were ignoring the significant progress.

It is very confusing to hear this message while having agreements with the authoritative leadership of the Palestinian people. Arriving at the Interim Agreement was not easy and its implementation is difficult. But despite the difficulties, despite the terror, despite the threats, the two sides remain determined to move forward. Two weeks ago, Israeli troops handed over control of Jenin, the first Arab city in the West Bank, to our Palestinian partners. Today, the transfer of responsibilities continues in Tulkarm; it is scheduled to be completed on 10 December. On 14 December, the Israeli Defence Forces are scheduled to complete their handing over of Nablus to the Palestinian Authority. Kalkiliya will be handed over three days later.

Fanatical terrorist groups still seek to undermine our progress. They kill innocent men, women and children. Radicals threaten their compatriots who are working towards the betterment of their people and for the betterment of generations yet unborn. We will not allow these extremists to succeed. To paraphrase Israel's founding father and first Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion: We must fight terror as if there were no peace and work towards peace as if there were no terror.

We are greatly encouraged by the success of the Palestinian Authority in combating terrorism in the Gaza Strip. We are confident that the Authority will continue this fight throughout the West Bank as well.

The first fruits of the peace process can already be seen. The Gaza Strip, for years one of the poorest areas, is beginning an unprecedented growth. Construction and building are the order of the day, due to foreign investment and contributions from international donors. For the first time in many years, Gazans are going out at night — not to protest, but to sit in cafés and dream of a better tomorrow.

Through economic development, we can eliminate the poverty and want that breed hatred and extremism. We call on the United Nations Member States and the international institutions to enhance economic and social development in Gaza and the West Bank.

The new reality that is being created on the ground today deserves international acknowledgement at the United Nations as well. It should be noted that some progress has been made. Nevertheless, there are still a number of General Assembly resolutions that do not reflect the new reality in the Middle East. The time has come for this body to refrain from adopting such resolutions. There are some anachronistic enclaves within the United Nations structure that should be eliminated as well.

Israel remains committed to continuing the peace process. We see no other way to serve the people of Israel, the region as a whole, the Palestinians and our future generations.

Mr. Razali (Malaysia): Today's debate in this Assembly coincides with the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. As we commemorate this special occasion, we hope that today's debate will promote and contribute to the peace process in the Middle East. We hope that this special occasion will serve as a reminder to the international community of its responsibility towards the Palestinian people.

The Malaysian Prime Minister, in his address on 29 September this year, during the general debate said:

> "In Palestine ... efforts continue to be made towards durable peace. That peace process must result in a Palestinian homeland, a viable State at peace with its neighbours". *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Plenary Meetings, 12th meeting, p. 3)*

Mr. Oddum (Saint Lucia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Since the beginning of the Madrid peace process in October 1991, the world has witnessed encouraging developments in the Palestinian-Israeli peace process. About two months ago, we witnessed another major event of political importance: the signing of the Israeli-

Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip in Washington, D.C. on 28 September. We believe that the Agreement is another major step towards a durable and lasting peace in the Middle East, in particular in the occupied Palestinian territories.

About four weeks ago, the international community was shocked to learn of the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin of Israel. It is regrettable that such a deplorable incident happened amidst encouraging and positive developments in the peace process. We do hope that his demise will not adversely affect the peace process. No act of terrorism should be allowed to derail the peace process. The parties involved and concerned should work with renewed vigour and redouble their efforts in pursuit of peace.

The Malaysian delegation welcomes the pledge made by Prime Minister Peres to forge ahead with Israel's agreement with the Palestine Liberation Organization to extend Palestinian self-rule to the West Bank as agreed. As was observed by His Excellency Mr. Yasser Arafat in his address at the Special Commemorative Meeting of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations:

> "This historic Palestinian-Israeli reconciliation must be carried through as envisaged." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Plenary Meetings, 35th meeting, p. 30)*

While there has been some progress on the political front, the situation on the ground is far from satisfactory. While recognizing the importance of an agreement as an important step in a process in which two parties learn to trust each other, it is important not to ignore that what really matters is what happens on the ground in the daily lives of the Palestinians. It has been reported that, since the Oslo Agreement was signed in 1993, the standard of living of the Palestinians in the occupied territories has dropped by 25 per cent. This, to my delegation, is regrettable.

For peace to flourish, progress in the search for a political settlement would have to be realistically translated into rapid rates of economic growth and development, in particular to improve the socio-economic conditions of the population in the occupied territories. In this regard, my delegation shares the following view expressed by the Secretary-General in his report on the work of the Organization:

> "The peace process needs broad public support and without a visible improvement in the living conditions of the Palestinians this support will remain fragile". *(A/50/1, para. 742)*

He also draws our attention to

> "the damaging effects which closures of the occupied territories by Israel have had on the nascent Palestinian economy". *(ibid.)*

The Malaysian delegation remains deeply disturbed by the observations made by the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories in its twenty-seventh report, contained in document A/50/463. That report, covering the period from 1 April to 18 August 1995, concluded that:

> "the general situation of human rights in the territories still remained very serious" *(A/50/463, p. 5)*

and that

> "the situation of human rights in the occupied territories ... has not improved and has in certain respects even deteriorated further". *(ibid., para. 712)*

One of the factors cited in the report to which this situation could be attributed was the repeated closure and restriction on the freedom of movement in the occupied territories imposed by the Israeli authorities. Violations of human rights, ostensibly on security considerations, cannot be condoned.

Given the current structure of the Palestinian economy, with its dependence on Israel, any restrictions imposed on the mobility of Palestinian labour would exacerbate the economic hardship of the population living in these areas. As a result of the closure, the rate of unemployment has increased. Before the imposition of the closure, there were about 120,000 Palestinians working in Israel. The closure has also had an adverse effect on the income of the Palestinians derived from exports of agriculture and agricultural produce. The daily losses owing to the continuing closure have been estimated at $8 million. The restrictions on agricultural exports from the Gaza Strip have been estimated to cost farmers $2 million a day. This situation needs to be urgently addressed.

Another issue of concern to my delegation is the continuing policy and practices regarding the settlement policy. My delegation is disturbed to note from the report of the Special Committee to investigate the Israeli practices that

> "the expansion of existing settlements has continued unabated." *(A/50/463, para. 729)*

According to the Committee's report, plans for the significant expansion of 11 settlements and the construction of 7,728 new homes in 1995 had been approved by the Israeli authorities. Various methods used to confiscate land were also reported. Such policy and practices are illegal, as they violate article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. They also constitute a violation of relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions.

The support of the international community is vital to ensure the success of the peace process. The international community must, therefore, continue to demonstrate its commitment and to fulfil its responsibility. The hard work of reconciliation and reconstruction has only just begun. To strengthen the advocates of peace and to isolate the enemies of peace, we need the political and economic support of the international community. It is important that the pledges from the international community be well coordinated and realized in the form of large, rapid disbursement, for the immediate benefit of the local population.

The United Nations, too, has a role to play. In this regard, we share the view expressed by President Arafat that the United Nations

> "should continue to sponsor our Palestinian cause, alongside the Israeli-Palestinian agreements, until the implementation of our inalienable ... rights, including the right of our people to return, self-determination and national independence." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth session, Plenary Meetings, 35th meeting, p. 30)*

The Malaysian delegation has always maintained that until these objectives are met the United Nations has a permanent responsibility towards the Palestinian people. In fact, close cooperation between all relevant players, including the United Nations, the Bretton Woods system, Member States and non-governmental organizations, is important to growth and development in those territories. Development is a prerequisite for lasting peace.

As for Malaysia, we should like to reaffirm our total commitment to, and unwavering support for, the Palestinian people and its leadership in the attainment of all its inalienable rights to exercise self-determination and to establish an independent State. We are opposed to any attempt to deny the Palestinians their rights in Jerusalem and to any attempt to undermine the credibility of the present leadership. This was emphasized by the Prime Minister of Malaysia in his address to the Assembly during this session's general debate, in which he stated:

> "The attempts to weaken the present Palestinian leadership by undermining its credibility will only result in the rise of extremism and a protracted and bloody intra-Palestinian conflict which will spill over into Israel and elsewhere." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Plenary Meetings, 12th meeting, p. 3)*

Lastly, it is the hope of my delegation that the forthcoming elections in the occupied territories will take place as scheduled. It is our hope that the elections will be held in a peaceful manner. The international community should therefore support the Palestinian people in building their political system on the basis of democratic plurality and on the basis of freedom.

Mr. Maruyama (Japan): In the annals of the Middle East peace process, the year 1995 will be recorded as one of significant achievement and profound loss. After long and difficult negotiations, this past September Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization reached an agreement on expanding Palestinian interim self-government. Japan heartily welcomed this agreement as an important milestone, and at the signing ceremony, held in Washington, its Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Yohei Kono, paid high tribute to the parties on both sides for their courage and determination.

But just one month later came the tragic and, indeed, heartbreaking news of the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. Peace-loving peoples everywhere mourned the passing of this great statesman and servant of his people. Japan strongly hopes that the parties concerned will not let this violent incident deter them from their objective, but will remain steadfast in their resolve to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace throughout the Middle East.

The ongoing Middle East peace process was launched with the courage and commitment of the leaders of the parties concerned. Despite the loss of Prime Minister Rabin, it has become clear that the tide of history cannot be reversed. The peace process will move forward. As they gathered at the State funeral of their fallen colleague, the leaders of countries from around the world insisted that the peace process must not be permitted to languish, and affirmed that the parties concerned would have the undivided support of the international community.

What is required now is the smooth and prompt implementation of the agreement on the expansion of Palestinian interim self-government. Israel's new Prime Minister, Mr. Shimon Peres, has declared his determination to continue the efforts of his late predecessor and push the peace process forward. He has proclaimed that the Israeli forces in the West Bank will be redeployed and that the election of a Palestinian Council will be held on schedule. As a matter of fact, Israel withdrew its forces from Jenin on 13 November.

As Prime Minister Murayama affirmed in the course of his visit to the Middle East this past September, Japan is steadfast in its support for the peace process, and will cooperate to the best of its ability by providing both goods and personnel required for the election of the Palestinian Council. It will do so in the belief that the establishment of the first democratic system of Palestinian self-government, based on free and fair elections, will stabilize the situation in the region and ensure that the overall peace process is successful.

Recognizing that assistance to the Palestinians is one of the most important pillars of its contribution to the peace process, Japan pledged $200 million for the two-year period beginning in September 1993. To date, it has disbursed over $150 million of that amount through various international organizations — directing its assistance, for example, to helping cover the start-up costs of Palestinian self-government and to health and educational projects aimed at raising the living standard of the Palestinian people. It has also decided to extend a portion of its assistance directly to the Palestinian people. Japan will continue to provide the same positive assistance it has been providing.

The Middle East peace process, particularly the Palestinian track, is entering a crucial phase. Along with the implementation of the agreement on the expansion of Palestinian interim self-government, extremely difficult issues must be addressed, including the negotiations on a permanent status agreement. Japan hopes the parties concerned will confront these issues with wisdom and fortitude so that the Palestinian and Israeli peoples can look forward to a secure and prosperous future. For its part, Japan will spare no effort to promote the Middle East peace process and to contribute to the social and economic development of the region.

Mr. Al-Nahyan (United Arab Emirates) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I wish to join previous speakers in extending thanks and appreciation to Ambassador Kéba Birane Cissé, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and the members of the Committee, for their unremitting efforts in following up the Palestinian question and its developments. The United Nations, since its inception, has performed an important role in supporting the Palestinian people's struggle for self-determination and the establishment of its independent State on its national soil through the adoption of numerous resolutions that today constitute the underpinnings of the ongoing peace negotiations between the Palestinian Authority and Israel. Those United Nations resolutions have also provided the basis of the Declaration of Principles and other agreements, the latest of which as been the Taba agreement of September 1995 whereby Palestinian autonomy has been extended to areas of the West Bank that had been under occupation since 1967.

The United Arab Emirates has always been in favour of a lasting and comprehensive solution to the question of Palestine. We have always reaffirmed the need to abide by the resolutions of international legality and have provided humanitarian, financial and developmental support to the Palestinian Arab people in order to alleviate its suffering under Israel's occupation of its homeland. We view the Israeli-Palestinian agreements as a preliminary first step towards the establishment of a Palestinian State with its capital at Al-Quds Al-Sharif, Jerusalem, on the basis of Security Council resolutions, *inter alia*, 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as well as the principle of land for peace.

Notwithstanding the progress achieved so far, we are deeply concerned, as is the international community as a whole, at the obstacles to the peace plan put forward by the Israeli authorities, *inter alia*, the delays in implementing the agreements concluded between the Palestinian National Authority and Israel, in releasing of Palestinian prisoners, in dealing with violations of human rights, as well as the continued confiscation of land, the laying of seige to Palestinian towns and villages and the expansion of settlements, especially in Al-Quds.

The design of "Greater Israel's Jerusalem" which Israel has been trying to implement through the entrenchment of its occupation, its Judaization of the Holy Sites, its expulsion of the Palestinian and Arab inhabitants, the changes it is introducing to the demographic characteristics of Al-Quds and its endeavours to have foreign embassies transferred to the city are all in flagrant violation of Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, particularly Security Council resolution 478 (1980).

The credibility of the Israeli Government requires that Government to demonstrate the sincerity of its intentions towards peace by taking positive steps that would be in keeping with the search for a just and durable peace. Such steps should put an end to the attempt of changing the demographic composition of Al-Quds and should prove that Israel is really prepared to put in place the arrangements it committed itself to in this respect.

The repeated acts of violence and attacks perpetrated by Israeli settlers daily against the defenceless Palestinian people are the inevitable result of the tacit support extended to the settlers by the Israeli Government, either in the form of weapons and financial subsidies that finance their activities, or by the absence of laws and regulations that would deter them from engaging in such terroristic activities. The containment of this very dangerous phenomenon requires, in the first instance, addressing its root cause, namely, the continued Israeli occupation of Palestinian towns and villages and the deteriorating humanitarian condition and everyday life of the Palestinian people as a result of its deteriorating developmental, economic and social conditions. Consequently, the United Arab Emirates reaffirms yet once again that if the process of Palestinian-Israeli peace is to succeed, Israel must honour its undertakings in the agreements it has concluded with the Palestinian National Authority. The international community, for its part, must honour its undertakings by continuing to provide assistance to the Palestinian people in order for that people to be able to satisfy its needs and to rebuild its infrastructures which have been destroyed during the long years of occupation.

The peaceful and just settlement of the Palestinian question will never be achieved without the establishment of the independent Palestinian State. This, again, will never be achieved without Israel's complete withdrawal from all the occupied Arab and Palestinian territories, especially Al-Quds Al-Sharif, the dismantling of the settlements, the return of the Palestinian refugees and displaced persons to their homeland and the adherence by Israel to the agreements it has concluded with the Palestinian National Authority in implementation of the resolutions of international legality.

Mr. Kittikhoun (Lao People's Democratic Republic) (*interpretation from French*): On 14 May 1948, when the United Kingdom withdrew its forces and terminated its Mandate, the State of Israel was established. According to the Partition Plan approved by the General Assembly on 29 November 1947, an Arab State was also supposed to be created. To our profound regret, that Arab State has not yet been born. It is our fervent hope that an Arab State that will be a good neighbour and friend to the State of Israel may be established in the very near future, thereby putting an end to this painful Israeli-Arab conflict that is today more than four decades old. My delegation, with measured optimism, wishes to make a positive contribution to this debate and to that process.

On the whole, there have been positive developments in the situation in the Middle East, despite certain setbacks. After the signing of the Declaration of Principles in Washington in 1993, Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization have continuously demonstrated their wisdom and have done their utmost to ensure that the peace process remains on track. The Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement to extend Palestinian self-rule to the West Bank of the Jordan, signed on 28 September 1995, marked a new, significant stage in the implementation by the two parties of the Declaration of Principles. The Lao People's Democratic Republic welcomes this positive development and believes that it represents an important step towards the enjoyment of the fundamental national rights of the Palestinian people.

The question of Palestine, as we all know, is not new. We have all witnessed and participated in the deliberations surrounding it, and it is almost five decades old today. We are living in a new era — an era of dialogue and cooperation — and it would not be in the interest of either regional or world peace for this conflict to continue. The international community as a whole must therefore do everything possible to further the peace process to which both parties have committed themselves. For its part, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, faithful to its consistent policy of peace, friendship and cooperation with all countries of the world, will spare no effort to make its positive contribution to the effort of the two parties — Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization — to continue their negotiations so as to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement, based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as well as other relevant General Assembly resolutions.

The road to peace is not smooth and no doubt still seems long. Indeed, we are witnessing exactions and repeated acts of violence in the occupied territories. Those practices must cease immediately so that conditions conducive to the peace process can be established. The two parties have clearly demonstrated their good faith concerning the comprehensive implementation of the Agreements signed, and thus the peace process has every chance to succeed. This cause of peace is just. In our view, promoting it is an endeavour whose fulfilment is worthy, lofty and noble.

Mr. Poernomo (Indonesia): As this Assembly, at its historic fiftieth session, is once again taking up the question of Palestine, it is fitting to recall that no other conflict has so preoccupied the Organization as that concerning Palestine. It cannot be denied that the United Nations has exerted more efforts to bring about a just settlement of this question than any other conflict situation brought before it. Indeed, since its very first session the General Assembly has been seized of the unremitting search for a peaceful resolution of this conflict that would lead to the attainment of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and independence.

Throughout the ensuing years, scores of initiatives and decisions have been taken to bring about a just and negotiated solution to the question of Palestine, based on the relevant United Nations resolutions. In this context, it is appropriate to recall that as early as 1955 the newly emergent states of Asia and Africa met in Bandung and recognized that the denial of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination constituted the root cause of the Middle East conflict and affirmed their support for a just settlement. This firm solidarity was reaffirmed in the Declaration adopted during the observance, in Bandung in April 1995, of the fortieth anniversary of the Asian-African Conference.

Above all, the international community has been steadfast in calling upon Israel to abide by Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). The Government and people of Indonesia have maintained an unwavering commitment to the expeditious implementation of these resolutions.

Today, as we renew our consideration of this agenda item, the Middle East peace process has continued to witness developments of far-reaching significance. The historic signing of the Declaration of Principles two years ago has been followed by a number of important agreements, most recently the Cairo Protocol on Further Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities, of 27 August 1995, and the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip signed in Washington, D.C. on 28 September 1995. The latter instrument, which *inter alia* provides for further Israeli withdrawal from areas in the West Bank, as well as Palestinian elections to an Interim Self-Governing Authority, constitutes another important step towards the realization of the cherished aspirations of the Palestinian people.

Although we have witnessed positive developments and major breakthroughs in the peace process, numerous obstacles and challenges still lie ahead. Delays and shortcomings in the implementation of the Declaration of Principles must be urgently overcome. In addition, acts of senseless violence and the perpetration of political assassinations, including that which has tragically taken the life of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, must not be allowed to adversely affect the peace process. At the present crucial stage in the peace process, it is, indeed, imperative that the agreements already reached be expeditiously and fully implemented. Furthermore, we deem it essential for the parties concerned to begin earnest negotiations on the remaining areas and the final status issues, including Jerusalem, settlements, borders and refugees.

Progress towards the attainment of Palestinian rights requires drastic improvements in the people's economic and living conditions. As we have come to acknowledge, political and socio-economic development are mutually interdependent. Decades of occupation have had a devastating effect on the socio-economic infrastructures in the occupied territory. It is therefore essential for the international community to extend every assistance to the Palestinian Authority to promote sustainable development and prosperity for all Palestinians. In this regard, we are pleased to note the important strides made by the Palestinian Authority over the past year, not only in establishing its own administration, but also in significantly improving the living conditions in its area of responsibility. Indonesia is, however, acutely aware that the economic well-being of the Palestinian people is intimately linked to the wider Middle East and North African region. We are therefore gratified to note that the proposals emerging from the Middle East/North Africa Economic Summit held at Casablanca in 1994 were later reiterated in the joint communiqué issued by the concerned parties on 12 February 1995 at Washington, D.C.

This event was particularly significant as it constitutes an initial step towards integrating the Palestinian economy into the broader regional framework and in transforming the region from an area of conflict and poverty to one of peace and prosperity.

Given the enormity of the tasks in providing overall guidance and facilitating international assistance to meet the short- and long-term needs of the Palestinian people, it is only fitting that there has been a notable increase in the involvement of the United Nations system in these efforts, as reflected in the activities of the United Nations Special Coordinator, Mr. Terje Rod Larsen. We are indeed heartened by this development. The Indonesian delegation also commends the role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, whose dedicated and tireless efforts have not only alleviated the plight of Palestinian refugees, but have also contributed immensely to the field of socio-economic development which is so crucial at this stage of the peace process. My delegation is also pleased to have been associated with the work of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People in mobilizing the international community and world public opinion to the sacred cause of the Palestinian people.

In conclusion, it is undeniable that the United Nations bears a historical responsibility as regards the question of Palestine until a final settlement is reached in all aspects. In this regard, its full engagement in the peace process as well as its assistance in the building of essential infrastructures and extending assistance in the economic, technical and development fields to the Palestinian people should be sustained and intensified. Through such a process we are confident that a new chapter in the history of the Middle East region will be opened — one that is marked by stable peace, harmony and justice.

Mr. Hallak (Syrian Arab Republic) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: The United Nations dedicates the 29 November of every year to the celebration of the Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People — a people whose calamity and displacement date back to the beginning of the past five decades. This is a people who, since 1948, has constituted the largest mass of refugees and displaced persons and of people languishing under foreign occupation and domination.

The magnitude of the Palestinian tragedy has been such that from the very beginning, the United Nations had to set up a Relief and Works Agency especially for the Palestinian people, and has kept the just cause of that people as an item on its agenda to this day. Notwithstanding, the injustice and oppression the Palestinian people has been subjected to, still continue because Israel continues to deny the Palestinian people its fundamental national rights, the right to establish its own independent state on its soil and the right to self-determination.

The Foreign Minister of my country addressed a letter this morning to the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People wherein he reiterated and reaffirmed Syria's continued support for the Palestinian people in its struggle, its just struggle, to recover its legitimate national rights, foremost among which is its right to self-determination on an equal footing with all other peoples. The letter reaffirms that Syria, whose history has been closely linked with defending the rights of the Palestinian people and the Palestinian cause, remains loyal and committed to its principles and will continue to work for the achievement of a just comprehensive peace on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) as well as on the basis of the principle of land for peace.

I cannot but seize this opportunity to pay a tribute to the Chairman and members of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for their efforts in preparing the report contained in document A/50/35. The report states:

> "... the situation in the areas still under Israeli occupation gave reason for concern and continued to create facts on the ground that had potential negative effects for the future exercise of Palestinian rights and the peace process itself." *(A/50/35, para. 22)*

Moreover, paragraph 118 of the report states that the settlement must be based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and other Arab territories occupied since 1967.

The whole world is well aware of the fact that the Palestinian question is the quintessence of the Arab-Israeli conflict. It is the cause of an entire people, whose territories have been occupied and whose rights have been usurped. Two thirds of that people live in exile, while the rest languish under occupation. There is no doubt that putting an end to the occupation and withdrawal by Israel from the territories it has occupied since 1967, the recognition of the right of the Palestinian people to return to its homeland, compensating the Palestinian people for its losses in terms of property, and apologizing to it for the historic injustice it has endured for half a century are the fundamental prerequisites for the achievement of a lasting and just peace.

Al-Quds is part of the Arab territories that have been occupied since 1967. All measures aimed at changing its status will always be null and void, in accordance with the resolutions of the Security Council and the principles of international law. Any attempt, by any party, to change the status of the city will carry the seeds of many dangers, because it would flout the principles of international law and of international legality.

In this connection, the Syrian Arab Republic has found it strange indeed for the American Congress, as the United States legislative authority, to adopt a resolution that contravenes the norms of international legality. In a statement made on that occasion, the Syrian Arab Republic has reminded the United States of America, as sponsor of the peace process, of the guarantees it gave to Syria, during the Madrid peace conference, that the United States of America would not recognize the annexation of the Golan and east Jerusalem. The Government of my country hopes that the United States of America will respect its resolutions and maintain their credibility, and thus refrain from offending and infringing the rights of millions of Arabs, Muslim and Christian alike.

The Council of the League of Arab States, at its 104th session, adopted a resolution on Al-Quds that reaffirmed not only the Arab identity of the city but also Palestinian sovereignty over it, and recalled the Council's resolution 4328, which specifies the measures to be adopted by any State that transfers its diplomatic mission to Al-Quds or recognizes it as the capital of Israel.

Recent developments in the peace process have shown that Israel is not really seeking a peace that would put an end to conflict, to occupation and to settler-colonialism — a peace that would guarantee security and stability for all. On the contrary, Israel has focused on obtaining from those negotiating with it signatures on hundreds of pages and maps that would shackle the Palestinian people, after the sacrifices it has made, and put it on an endless road of suffering, trials and tribulations, rather than open any road towards liberation and independence. Instead, Israel has sought to entrench its interests through a distorted peace that would infringe the sovereignty and dignity of the Palestinian people, trample the principle of land for peace, ignore Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), legitimize the occupation of Arab territories and that would never guarantee the rights of the Palestinian people, without which no one could talk of a just lasting peace. Peace that is imposed through the imposition of the conditions of one party on the other and that creates a sense of injustice will never lead to anything but renewed tension and instability.

The road to peace is very clear and known to all. The existence of any people or State cannot be guaranteed at the expense of the existence of other peoples and States. The security of States cannot be based on territorial expansion and occupation. Those who try to delude the world into believing that peace has become a reality only delude themselves, for peace cannot coexist with occupation and with the denial of the rights of others. Peace can exist only in the existence of justice and respect for international legality and the principles of international law.

Mr. Kharrazi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Today marks the annual International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, and on this occasion I should like to reiterate once again the support of the Government and people of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the Palestinian people and their just cause.

During the past 50 years, the question of Palestine has been featured prominently on the United Nations agenda, and it remains the most enduring subject since the establishment of the United Nations. However, the Palestinian people continue to suffer from extremely poor living conditions under the occupation, and the latest report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People (A/50/463) indicates that their situation has deteriorated in many aspects during the past year. According to this report, the general human rights situation of the Palestinians in the occupied territories remains very serious and a matter of grave concern. The inhumane practices of the Zionist regime, including the sealing off or closure of areas of the occupied territories, the demolition of homes, the confiscation of land and the expansion of settlements, have resulted in violations of the fundamental freedoms of the Palestinian people.

A continuing source of tension in the occupied territories is the existence and expansion of settlements. In previous years, the violent actions of armed Jewish settlers caused the deaths of a large number of Palestinians. One instance of such crimes was the horrible massacre of innocent worshippers in the Al-Ibrahimi Mosque in Al-Khalil by settlers protected by the Zionist regime's army.

The expansion of settlements in the last two years has been clearly highlighted in the report of the Special Committee, which reiterates that the situation regarding the expropriation of land is particularly serious in Jerusalem. Israeli authorities have carried out a deliberate policy aimed at reducing the number of Arabs and Muslims in Jerusalem and creating a new demographic, geographic and political situation in the city. According to the report

> "This policy has intensified since the signing of the Declaration of Principles", *(A/50/463, para. 733)*

and the practice of closing Jerusalem has worsened over the last year.

It is the view of my delegation that the international community should particularly condemn such practices of the occupying Power, as well as measures and decisions taken by those countries that help the Zionist regime in altering the character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem.

The increasing killings, detentions and mistreatment of detainees are among other aspects of the generally inhumane practices of the occupying forces in Palestine. During the past year, Israeli undercover units martyred several Palestinian activists within and outside the occupied territories. Furthermore, the Zionists continue to practise aggravated forms of torture in interrogating the Palestinians, which have sometimes resulted in death. As stated by the Chairman of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices, the situation of Palestinian prisoners detained in prisons in the occupied territories and conditions of detention have actually deteriorated since the signing of the Oslo and Cairo Agreements.

Israeli mistreatment of the Palestinian people is in line with the overall policies of the Zionist regime to dominate the region through, *inter alia*, continued occupation of Palestine, southern Lebanon and the Golan Heights. The same policy is pursued through enhancement of Israeli nuclear-weapon technology, which continues to go unchecked. The existence of nuclear-weapon facilities in Dimona is an open secret which threatens the entire Middle East region. That is why Israel is so adamant about rejecting the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and putting its nuclear facilities under an International Atomic Energy Agency safeguard regime.

Therefore, through such flagrant violations of international law, one can see why Israel tends to create imaginary threats so that its misdeeds in the region and beyond can be justified. It is clear to all impartial observers in the Middle East that the passage of time has not changed the realities prevailing there. Equally clear is the fact that the mere communication of analyses of the situation by those familiar with the history of the region does not in any way affect the success or failure of the process. The root causes of the problem must be addressed if we are to find a just solution to the problems in the Middle East.

It is in this context that we believe that a comprehensive and just solution to the question of Palestine and the other occupied territories lies in the full realization of all rights of the people of Palestine, including the return of all Palestinian refugees to their own land, which will enable them to exercise their inalienable rights to self-determination and the liberation of all occupied Palestinian, Lebanese and Syrian territories.

Mr. Allaghany (Saudi Arabia) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Allow me on behalf of my delegation to express my thanks and appreciation to His Excellency Ambassador Kéba Birane Cissé, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people, as well as the members of the Committee, for their sincere efforts in carrying out their noble task and making international opinion aware of the Palestinian question and its various developments.

Once again the General Assembly discusses the Palestinian issue in its multifarious dimensions as it remains the central issue, the crux of the conflict between Arabs in Israel. In fact, it means that it is the main access — the most important one — for achieving any worthwhile progress in the peace process and the Middle East.

Over the past few weeks, we have witnessed some very important and positive developments within the overall framework of the peace process in the Middle East that started in Madrid back in 1991. Those developments, which were welcomed by the Government of my country, could never have been possible without the will and steadfastness of the peoples of the region and their determination to forge ahead despite difficulties of all kinds. Obviously, there is no denying that there has been progress towards peace. However, we are still concerned because of the repeated acts of violence which aim at hampering the peace process as well as the continued enforcement of some Israeli policies, such as the expansion of settlements, collective punishment, the repeated closure of the occupied territories and, therefore, the isolation of holy Al-Quds, as well as non-adherence by Israel, the occupying authority, to the Fourth Geneva Convention.

The international community expects from Israel some very concrete confidence-building measures. However, Israel has done exactly the opposite. Thousands of Palestinians still languish in Israeli jails and if a few of them are released they are not allowed to go back to their villages, their homes and cities and are even compelled to live in other areas. In addition, the policy of annexation and settlement continues to be practised.

Today, between 60 and 70 per cent of the occupied territories are still in Israeli hands, either in the hands of the military forces or in the hands of the settlers. The persistence of Israel in trying to change the demography of the Palestinian land breaches United Nations resolutions and runs counter to the commitments and undertakings Israel took upon itself in the Declaration of Principles. Here we should like to refer to the statement by the Committee in its report (A/50/35) regarding the continuous responsibility of the United Nations.

The Government of my country believes that the peace process in the Middle East is based on a comprehensive percept that takes into account all the political, economic and social aspects which must be addressed in an analogous and harmonious manner in order for us to reach the comprehensive solution we all desire. Consequently, the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine must be based on resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), on the withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian territories, including Al-Quds, the first of the two Qiblas, the third holy shrine, from all the other Arab territories which have been under occupation since 1976, and the withdrawal by Israel from southern Lebanon in compliance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

It is true that the Declaration of Principles between Israel and the PLO has been followed by implementation Agreements and that the Declaration of Principles provides for an interim five-year period during which Israel will withdraw from Gaza, Jericho and the West Bank and will redeploy its forces in the remaining Palestinian occupied territories. It is expected of the two co-sponsors of the Madrid Peace Conference to force Israel to honour its undertakings and to stop obstructing the process, especially now that the Agreement on the second stage of the Declaration of Principles has been signed not long ago in Washington. According to that Agreement, the Israeli forces will be redeployed, preparations for the first Palestinian elections will take place, and further spheres of competence will be transferred to the Palestinian self-government authorities. All this will fully guarantee political stability and will constitute a qualitative leap on the Palestinian track. Therefore, Israel's insistence on holding on to Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its so-called eternal capital does not change the fact that Al-Quds is part and parcel of the Arab territories that have been under occupation by Israel by Israel since 1967 and, consequently, the resolutions of international legality apply to Al-Quds just as they apply to any other part of the occupied Arab territories.

Also, the deteriorating economic and social conditions in the West Bank and Gaza are cause for concern and call for alertness and attention. We welcome all the efforts made to organize international conferences of an economic and financial nature to provide financial assistance to the Palestinian people. In this context, the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has pledged, during the international conference for donors, held in Washington in 1993, to offer 100 million dollars to the World Bank programme in order to fulfil the most urgent needs of the Palestinian economy, as well as another pledge to provide 100 million dollars for the Palestinian National Authority during the ministerial meeting on the coordination of assistance held in Washington on 29 September 1995. My Government will continue to provide all the assistance it can to help Palestinians achieve the right to self-determination and their legitimate aspirations after the establishment of their independent State. The positions and stances of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia towards the legitimate and inalienable rights of the Palestinians are based on its absolute belief in the legitimacy of those rights and on its full respect for the objectives and principles enshrined in the Charters of the United Nations, of the League of Arab States and of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

The report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, as contained in document A/50/463, paints a very bleak and unchanged picture of the deteriorating human rights situation of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories. The report very clearly states that the main reason for tension and instability in the occupied territories is the continued existence of Israeli settlements. Such continued tension and instability pose a threat to peace and security in the region. Peace is peace. It does not take too many interpretations to define the meaning of peace. It is defined very accurately in the resolutions of the United Nations and in the pledges of the two co-sponsors of the Madrid Peace Conference, the United States of America and the Russian Federation.

The role of the United Nations in the peace process relates in particular to the exercise by the Palestinian people of all its rights. In this context, we should like to commend the efforts of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and of the specialized agencies of the United Nations in preparing the Palestinians to handle their affairs once the responsibilities are transferred to the Palestinian Authority.

Over the past 50 years of its life, the United Nations has faced different crises, which have varied in intensity and in the seriousness of the threat they posed to international peace and security. Since 1947, the United Nations has been seized of the question of Palestine, the core issue of the Arab-Israeli conflict, in the General Assembly, in the Security Council and in the various bodies and specialized agencies of the Organization. The reason for this is that the United Nations bears a continuing responsibility towards the question of Palestine, a legal, political and moral responsibility the United Nations should continue to shoulder until such a time as a final, just and lasting solution to the issue of Palestine is reached in conformity with the resolutions of international legality.

Mr. Wang Xuexian (China) *(Interpretation from Chinese)*: The late Prime Minister of Israel, Mr. Yitzhak Rabin, made vigorous efforts and an important contribution to the promotion of the Middle East peace process. His assassination is a major loss for the cause of peace in the Middle East. I wish to take this opportunity to express once again, on behalf of the Chinese Government and people, our profound condolences to the Israeli Government and people.

Since the last session of the General Assembly, important progress has been made in the Middle East peace process. Jordan and Israel have formally established diplomatic relations. Syria and Israel have also conducted many rounds of substantive talks.

Not long ago, Palestine and Israel formally signed, after arduous negotiations, the Israel-Palestine Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which represents an important outcome of the negotiations on extending self-government in Palestine following the signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements in the Gaza Strip and Jericho Area by Palestine and Israel in May last year. It also represents another important step towards the complete restoration of their legitimate national rights to the Palestinian people and towards comprehensive, fair and lasting peace and stability in the Middle East. We welcome and support these developments.

China has held all along that the Palestinian question is at the core of the Middle East question. A fair and reasonable settlement of this question at an early date and the restoration of their legitimate national rights to the Palestinian people will contribute to peace, stability and development in the Middle East region as a whole. We are pleased to note that, with the help and support of the international community, the Palestinian people have made fresh progress in their nation-building.

The Middle East peace process is now at a critical juncture that calls for comprehensive and effective implementation by all parties concerned of the agreements already reached and the adoption of measures to consolidate the progress already made to avoid any setbacks or back-sliding. With the further deepening of the negotiations, the questions involved will be increasingly complicated and sensitive. The parties concerned should therefore continue to overcome obstacles, using a flexible and pragmatic approach, and make persistent efforts for all-round progress in the peace talks. We are convinced that, so long as the Palestinian people make unremitting efforts for their cause and continue to win the sympathy and support of the international community, the sacred objective of restoring the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people will finally be achieved.

Over the years, the international community, particularly the United Nations, has made positive and important contributions to the promotion of the peaceful settlement of the questions of Palestine and the Middle East as a whole. We are pleased to note that the United Nations has taken a more active part in the assistance projects and programmes for the Palestinian people in the past year. At present, full-scale reconstruction has yet to be undertaken in the Palestinian self-rule areas. With the further expansion of self-rule areas, the Palestinian

Interim Self-Governing Authority is facing the arduous and pressing task of reconstruction and therefore urgently needs the support and assistance of the international community.

At the same time, regional economic cooperation and economic development have also achieved good momentum in the region thanks to the relaxation of the Middle East situation. The second Middle East/North Africa Economic Summit, held in Amman, Jordan, conducted intensive and in-depth discussions on the improvement of the economic environment and the promotion of economic development in the region. A number of concrete results were achieved.

We believe that the United Nations has a permanent responsibility for the question of Palestine until a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement is reached. We hope that the United Nations will not only muster the support of the international community for the smooth implementation of the Palestine-Israel agreement, thus continuing to play a positive role in promoting a comprehensive and fair settlement of the Palestinian question, but also make greater efforts for Palestine's social and economic development and reconstruction during the transitional period.

The Chinese Government and people have always closely followed the Palestinian question, sympathized with the Palestinian people in their sufferings in the past, supported the just cause of the Palestinian people and supported and vigorously promoted the Middle East peace process. We heartily rejoice at the positive progress made by the parties concerned through political negotiations and have ardent hopes for further progress. China is ready to participate in the reconstruction of the Palestinian self-rule areas. Since the signing of the Palestine-Israel Agreement, the Chinese Government has provided financial and material support, within its capacity, for economic development in the Palestinian self-rule areas in addition to continued contributions to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. The Chinese Government will also soon provide a grant of 8 million yuan renminbi to the Palestinian Self-Governing Authority. Moreover, the Chinese Government has decided to set up an office in the Palestinian self-rule areas and will accredit a permanent representative to it.

In the future, China will, as always, continue to make its own efforts, together with the international community and the peoples of the Middle East, for the final settlement of the Middle East question, including the question of Palestine, and the realization of peace and development in the Middle East in a comprehensive, fair and reasonable manner.

Mr. Ahamed (India): My delegation is happy to speak today, the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. This day underlines the support of the international community for the people of Palestine in their quest for peace and justice and the realization of their legitimate goals and aspirations.

India's bond of friendship with the Palestinian people is firm and unshakable. It needs no reaffirmation. Our historical contacts covered almost every aspect of human life and endeavour: cultural, social, religious, economic and political. This tradition has been renewed and strengthened in modern times. As testimony to our ongoing support of the Palestinian National Authority, the Government of India has, from July 1995, recognized the passport and travel documents issued by the Palestinian National Authority. India has also decided to establish a liaison office in Gaza.

During the past two years, historic developments of far-reaching consequence have taken place. These have been the results of initiatives undertaken by the visionary leadership of Palestine and Israel to end the chapter of feuding and bloodshed and usher in a new era of peace, stability and coexistence. My delegation salutes the courage and the spirit of accommodation and optimism that have produced the blueprints for a new *modus vivendi* in the region.

India wholeheartedly welcomed the signing on 28 September 1995 of the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. It is a significant step in the implementation of the Declaration Principles signed on 13 September 1993. Much, however, remains to be tackled and resolved.

The road to the present juncture has been long and arduous. It has been paved with numerous sacrifices, including lives of those devoted to establishing peace. In this context, may I take the opportunity to convey to the General Assembly deep condolences on the tragic assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. We are however, gratified to note that the courage displayed by the leadership will continue to be sustained and that efforts to find a lasting solution will be further intensified.

There is general recognition that support for the peace process cannot be confined to the political track. It is necessary to focus on the multifaceted tasks of nation-building. The Palestinian Authority will require assistance, particularly in the fields of health, education and the creation of employment. Infrastructure development will be a primary area of focus. The challenge posed by the pressing requirements of finance and technological support merit the urgent attention of the international community.

The convening of the Middle East and North Africa Economic Summit in Amman in October 1995 was an imaginative and far-sighted step, as it brought world statesmen, corporate leaders, financiers, technocrats and diplomats together for a focused discussion on ways to ensure the economic betterment of the region and its people. Regional cooperation, reinforced by global inputs, is an essential means of building prosperity and peace.

India will continue, in its own modest way, to extend to the Palestinian people material and technical assistance to consolidate their progress towards self-government and nation-building.

We recognize that it is the duty of all of us to work together to help move the peace process in West Asia forward. However, the really meaningful impetus for a permanent and lasting solution will have to come from the parties themselves. We are confident that, having made a breakthrough in neutralizing the long-standing areas of conflict, the leaderships of Palestine and of Israel will, together, work out plans for future coexistence with the same commitment as they have displayed so far. We trust that the momentum generated in the process of working towards a negotiated settlement of all issues that have caused strife in the area will be maintained.

Mr. Lamamra (Algeria) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I should like, at the outset, to thank the Secretary-General and the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for the very important reports on this that have been submitted for the information of the Member States of the latest developments in the question of Palestine and of the future expectations in that respect.

The history of the Palestinian question is bound up with the history of the United Nations, which is responsible for finding a comprehensive solution to this question. That is especially true this year, in which the international community celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations.

Today we celebrate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, and we do so in the light of new, important and positive developments aimed at the attainment of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, after long years of war and tragedies.

Algeria has welcomed the positive developments in the Middle East peace process, especially the agreements reached between the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel since September 1993 and subsequent steps. We think that the Declaration of Principles did represent in actual fact a turning-point, which will affect the history of the region if we redouble our efforts and focus on the need to achieve a just and lasting peace between the peoples of this vital region of the world, on the basis of relevant United Nations resolutions.

We have also noted the positive developments on the Jordanian-Israeli track.

Nevertheless, we have expressed understandable concern about the delays and procrastination in implementing the agreements between the Palestinians and the Israelis, in view of the negative impact of such phenomena on the performance of the Palestine National Authority and even on the credibility of the peace process itself. In fact, we are worried by persistent hurdles that prevent the Palestinian leadership from extending its sovereignty to the lands covered by the self-government agreements, as well as by the settlement activities, which are financed by private capital under the protection of the occupying authority, and the confiscation of lands and economic blockades, which prevent the inhabitants of the region from engaging in vital activities. The standard of living of the inhabitants of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, has actually deteriorated since September 1993.

Delay in the achievement of a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East will simply mean further instability, more tension and more violence, all of which threaten security and peace in the region as a whole and open the door wide to those extremists who wish to subvert every peaceful effort.

Terrorism in all its forms has become an international phenomenon that spares no one. We have seen its ugly face in Algeria, the United States, Japan, Saudi Arabia and the Gaza Strip, and it was highlighted recently by the assassination of the Israeli Prime Minister Rabin and the bombing of the Egyptian embassy in Islamabad. The common denominator in the case of all extremists, regardless of nationality, is that their aggression and bloodthirsty behaviour stem from religious slogans and the illusion that they are privy to absolute truths that give them licence to invoke religion in committing their crimes.

As terrorism has become one of the most dangerous contemporary challenges, action will have to be intensified in combating terrorism if the peace process in the Middle East is to be protected. Here, I must mention the importance of international cooperation, under the umbrella of the United Nations, to put an end to terrorism. Member States must do their utmost to achieve this goal. It is not enough to refrain from supporting terrorism; it is necessary for every State to combat it by every legitimate means, both in word and in deed.

The question of the Holy City of Al-Quds lies at the heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict because of its importance in the lives of both the Arab and the Muslim worlds. We therefore believe that the future of the peace process depends on the manner in which that problem is approached. It now seems that this question is to be dealt with in the final phase of the peace negotiations. This is understandable if the idea is first to create the confidence needed to enable all the parties to discuss such a highly sensitive issue successfully. We therefore believe that the Israeli authorities should desist as of now from taking any measures designed to alter in any radical way the very nature of Al-Quds. We also feel that the Member States of the United Nations must refrain from establishing or transferring embassies or diplomatic representatives there.

In addition to the Holy City of Al-Quds we have the problem of the Lebanese and Syrian occupied territories. It is impossible to achieve the desired peace in the Middle East without Israel's full and unconditional withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories. Here, we wish to reiterate our support for the efforts of the Lebanese Government to extend its sovereignty over all its national territory in conformity with Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which calls upon Israel to withdraw forthwith to its internationally recognized borders. We express the same solidarity and support with regard to the legitimate position of Syria in its insistence on the return of the Golan Heights.

We are fully confident that a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region must be founded on the implementation of the resolutions of international legality and the principle of land for peace, on enabling the Palestinian people to exercise its right to self-determination and to establish its own State in its homeland, on confidence-building measures amongst the countries of the region, on the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction and on the achievement of balanced security side by side with an economic environment that would benefit all the peoples of the region.

This outstanding session in the history of the United Nations will have risen to this great challenge if it results in the adoption of resolutions that would be in keeping with the principles and purposes of the Charter and that would contribute to steering the peace process in the right direction.

Announcement

The President: I wish to make an announcement concerning agenda item 23 — "Restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields".

I should like to inform members that I have appointed His Excellency Mr. Oscar De Rojas, Deputy Permanent Representative of Venezuela to the United Nations, to be the coordinator of the informal consultations on the draft resolution to be submitted under the agenda item.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.

United Nations A/50/PV.75

General Assembly

Fiftieth Session

Official Records

75th plenary meeting

Thursday, 30 November 1995, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral . . . . (Portugal)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Al-Ashtal (Yemen), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 42 (*continued*)

Question of Palestine

Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/50/35)

Report of the Secretary-General (A/50/725)

Mr. Laclaustra (Spain) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. Cyprus, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania also associate themselves with this statement.

The signing of the Declaration of Principles by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) on 13 September 1993, and subsequent progress in the peace process, allow us to speak about a real possibility of resolving the Palestinian question, which is at the centre of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The European Union welcomes the successful withdrawal of the Israeli security forces from the city of Jenin. This withdrawal is the first tangible result of the historic Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, signed by Israel and the PLO on 28 September, of which the European Union was a witness.

Following the signing of the Interim Agreement on self-government between Israel and the PLO, the peace process in the Middle East has entered a crucial phase, which involves risks and opportunities. There is a risk of continuing acts of violence, but there is also — and this is most important — an opportunity for increased political development and economic progress for the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

The European Union reaffirms its commitment to a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole, based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) and within the framework of the principles of international law. We intend to continue playing an active, constructive and balanced role in support of the Middle East peace process. We are determined to contribute to the success of this process, and we shall give both political and material support for this purpose, closely cooperating with all the regional interlocutors, the co-sponsors of the peace process and the participants in competent multilateral forums.

In the context of the European Union's common foreign and security policy, joint action to support the Middle East peace process was approved on 19 April 1994. In the framework of this joint action, the European Union has agreed to participate in monitoring elections to the Palestinian Council and in coordinating the international monitoring mission. Mr. Carl Lidbom, former Minister of Justice and Trade of Sweden, has been appointed to lead the European Electoral Unit established at the beginning of November 1995.

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

The European Union as a whole continues to be the principal donor of funds to the Palestinians. With the main aim of assisting the consolidation of the Palestinian Authority and improving the living conditions of the Palestinians, we have promised 500 million ECUs in aid for the period 1994-1999.

At the meeting of the Special Liaison Committee held in Paris in April, we undertook to provide a new financial aid package for the Palestinian Authority totalling $25 million, to come from the Community budget and national budgets.

On 9 December 1995 the second Conference on assistance to the Palestinian people will be held in Paris. The Conference will concentrate on tackling macroeconomic needs and on adopting a revised Tripartite Action Plan, defining the respective responsibilities of the Palestinians, the Israelis and the international donor community.

The European Union firmly believes that the development of the economic potential of the Palestinian people is vital for stability and growth throughout the region. In this respect, the Conference will give the international community the opportunity to reaffirm and to translate into concrete terms its support for the Middle East peace process.

Thanks to the resolute and courageous actions of the parties to the conflict and the support provided by those of us wishing to contribute to the establishment of peaceful coexistence between all the peoples of the region, much has already been achieved in that process. We must not allow the enemies of peace to alter with acts of violence the course of events that, although they may be developing slowly, are developing in accordance with the principles that made possible the convening of the Madrid Conference in 1991 and that we hope will lead to a fair, comprehensive and lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict in general and to the question of Palestine in particular.

Mr. Ould Ely (Mauritania) *(interpretation from French):* The delegation of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania is happy to participate once again in the debate on the question of Palestine, on which considerable progress towards the goal of peace has been made over the past year.

The peace process initiated in Madrid in October 1991, which made possible the signing of the Declaration of Principles of 13 September 1993 and the agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area of 4 May 1994, is being consolidated more and more, thanks to the foresight, tenacity and courage of Palestinian and Israeli leaders, who, despite diverse dangers and obstacles, have shown the world their determination to move forward in the quest for peace. The sudden and tragic passing of one of the protagonists of the peace process, the former Prime Minister of Israel, Mr. Yitzhak Rabin, far from shaking this determination, as the perpetrators of this heinous crime hoped, will, we are sure, lend strength to the supporters of peace. Mauritania will continue to support all those committed to this process, and we hope that peace can one day be established in this part of the Middle East — a comprehensive, just and lasting peace based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and on the total withdrawal of Israeli troops from occupied Arab territories, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif.

Inspired by those hopes, Mauritania welcomed the peace treaty of 26 October 1994 between Jordan and Israel, as well as the second implementation agreement of the Declaration of Principles, signed on 28 September 1995 in Washington, which envisaged, among other things, the implementation of the autonomy agreements in the rest of the West Bank and the holding of general, democratic Palestinian elections on 20 January of next year.

The remarkable progress in the peace process and in Israeli-Arab relations, however significant, should not divert us from the ultimate goal of the process, which remains the establishment of a just and lasting peace throughout the entire Middle East region. That is why we still hope to see the Israeli-Syrian and the Israeli-Lebanese negotiations produce more positive results.

The United Nations, for its part, will have to play a more active and larger role in this process. As was recently demonstrated in South Africa, a firm resolute commitment can help overcome major obstacles on the road to peace. We welcome the work done by the Special Coordinator and his personnel, who have spared no effort to bring about and consolidate peace. Their contribution will be crucial in coordinating the economic and social assistance provided by the United Nations to Palestinians throughout the occupied territories.

In paying tribute to the activities and efforts of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and its Chairman, Ambassador Cissé, we wish to express the hope that the Committee will continue to play the role assigned to it by the

General Assembly until the rights of the Palestinian people have been fully restored.

The climate of communication and dialogue that has emerged in this part of the Middle East since the beginning of the peace process, and whose practical results were seen at the Amman meeting last month, should spur the international community to redouble its efforts to bring about a rapid conclusion of the peace talks. We remain convinced that the establishment of a just and lasting peace in this nerve-centre of the world will help usher in an era of cooperation and justice for the benefit of all the peoples of the world, and from this conviction comes our commitment to support those who are participating, from near or from far, in bringing about that peace so long awaited by all.

Mr. De Silva (Sri Lanka): I would like to thank Ambassador Kéba Birane Cissé, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, for his statement introducing the report of the Committee.

Sri Lanka has consistently viewed the question of Palestine as the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict. We have always advocated a just and durable settlement. Sri Lanka has maintained that such a settlement requires, in essence, Israel's withdrawal from all occupied territories and the restoration of the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination and their right to a homeland of their own. There must also be a clear acceptance of the right of all States in the region to live in peace within secure and internationally accepted borders.

Since the historic breakthrough which came with the mutual recognition of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization in 1993, Sri Lanka has followed events in the region with interest. The signing of the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which includes provisions for self-government arrangements in the rest of the West Bank and for the holding of general democratic elections, is yet another important development in the peace process.

We welcome, and reaffirm our support of, these important and positive developments.

However, in spite of these developments, the peace process has been rendered more vulnerable by the tragic assassination of one of its principal architects, the late Prime Minister of Israel, Yitzhak Rabin. It is imperative that notwithstanding this shocking and deplorable event all parties involved continue to maintain the momentum generated by these agreements in order to ensure the smooth progress of the peace process.

While we recognize and appreciate the efforts made so far by various countries in helping the peace process move forward, we believe that the United Nations retains the permanent responsibility for the question of Palestine until a comprehensive and lasting solution is reached. It is essential that the peace process should receive the encouragement and support of the international community as a whole. In the construction of their State, the Palestinian people will need international assistance. The United Nations should mobilize the resources that will be needed for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of lands that become self-governing and free.

It is important that the United Nations play a more active and expanded role in the peace process and in the implementation of the Declaration of Principles.

Frequent travel restrictions imposed on Palestinians in the occupied territories and in the areas of self-rule have caused immense hardship for the Palestinian people and adversely affected their livelihood, since much of their economy is vulnerable. Although the closures may be proclaimed for reasons of security, the Israeli authorities should do their utmost to minimize the economic hardships endured by the people in the occupied territories as a result of such closures. The continued pursuit of the land confiscation and settlement policy of the Israeli Government not only has been contrary to Israel's obligations, but has also adversely affected the peace process. At the same time, there have been acts of violence aimed at disrupting the peace process. The groups that remain outside the peace negotiations on Palestine should be urged to recognize the wishes of the Palestinian people for a peaceful solution to the complex issues of the Palestinian question.

We note that the parties have indicated their firm commitment to the implementation of the 1995 agreements in good faith, in full accordance with an agreed timetable. We hope that the implementation of these agreements will continue without interruption until a permanent settlement is reached on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

Mrs. Hoang Thi Cu (Viet Nam): We are here today to reaffirm our unflinching support for the Palestinian people's legitimate cause — that is, to secure their inalienable right to self-determination and independence. We join the international community in welcoming the new and important progress achieved in the Middle East peace process in the past year.

We note with satisfaction that the peace process initiated in Madrid in 1991 has continued despite many difficulties and obstacles. The signing in September 1993 of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel created a dramatic turning-point in the search for peace in the Middle East, enabling the Palestinian people to take their first steps towards independence and opening new possibilities for cooperation between peoples of the region. The conclusion in September this year of the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip provided for the establishment of Palestinian interim self-government arrangements on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip. It is now essential to implement these agreements. This will require great efforts on the part of all parties concerned as well as the contribution of the international community. In this regard, we are very concerned by the acts of violence that have brought death and suffering to innocent people, arousing the concern and drawing the condemnation of peoples throughout the world. We hope that these acts will soon cease.

The Government and people of Viet Nam have been following very closely and with great interest the evolution of the situation in the Middle East, in particular the question of Palestine. In this regard, my delegation wishes to commend the good work done by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Division for Palestinian Rights. The report of the Committee (A/50/35) presents us with an overall range of activities carried out by the United Nations system for the promotion of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

In the light of the new developments in the peace process, it is of great importance for the United Nations to maintain its permanent responsibility with respect to the question of Palestine until it is resolved in all its aspects. We believe that a just and peaceful final settlement to the question of Palestine must be based on Security council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Therefore, there is a need for the full engagement of the United Nations in the peace process and in the process of building Palestinian self-government institutions, as well as in providing technical and economic assistance to the Palestinian people in all needed fields.

In this connection, we support the recommendations concerning the Committee's mandate that are contained in the Committee's report. We are of the view that the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights should continue their endeavours for the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. We share the view expressed by the Permanent Observer of Palestine at a recent meeting of the Committee that the Palestinian people need the Committee now more than ever in their efforts to realize their inalienable rights, particularly the right to self-determination.

The Government and people of Viet Nam strongly believe that, with their tradition of undaunted struggle and with the deep sympathy and unswerving support of the international community, the Palestinian people, under the leadership of the PLO, will attain final success in the near future.

Ms. Zafra Turbay (Colombia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People is an extremely significant occasion. The Government of Colombia is particularly enthusiastic about participating in this commemoration.

Colombia has been following with the greatest interest the developments in the process that begun in Madrid in 1991, which holds out the promise of a peaceful and negotiated solution to the conflict that has plagued the Middle East for so long.

My country supports the establishment of a Palestinian State in the region, in the context of coexistence and mutual respect between the States of the region and the genuine exercise of their rights by the Palestinian people.

The Heads of State or Government of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, meeting last October in the city of Cartagena, paid special attention to the Palestinian question in their discussions, in the light of the position traditionally taken by the Movement.

I wish to highlight the following paragraphs of the draft final document of the Conference, which relate to this issue. The Heads of State or Government "reaffirmed their unflinching support for the legitimate struggle of the Palestinian people to secure respect for its inalienable rights to self-determination and independence and reiterated their demand for the withdrawal of Israel from all occupied Palestinian and other Arab lands, including Jerusalem.

"They pointed out that the responsibility of the United Nations in this matter should continue until the Palestinian people are able to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination, until an independent and sovereign State is established within its national territory and until the problem of refugees is settled in conformity with human rights instruments and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations. They therefore insisted on the need for the General Assembly to reaffirm, at its fiftieth regular session, its position on the major aspects of a definitive peace settlement, including the status of Jerusalem, the illegal settlements and the refugees. They regretted Israel's decision to confiscate Palestinian land and property in Jerusalem as well as its attempts to alter the religious and historical character of the Holy City. In this respect, they reaffirmed all Security Council and General Assembly resolutions related to Jerusalem and considered the Israeli actions contrary to these resolutions as null and void. They voiced serious concern at the obstacles to the implementation of the Agreements. They called for the full and scrupulous implementation of the Agreements and, in particular, of the provisions of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 465 (1980) and 478 (1980). They underlined the need for the mechanism dealing with the issue of Palestine set up by the General Assembly to continue to operate effectively. The Heads of State or Government expressed their support for the call made by the Jerusalem Committee, meeting in Ifrane, Morocco on 16 and 17 January 1995, to the Security Council, in particular to the two sponsors of the peace conference, to take the necessary measures to compel Israel to desist from establishing any settlements, from attempts at Judaization and from any other geographic or demographic changes in the Holy City of Jerusalem; and to comply with the agreements and conventions providing for the preservation of the Palestinian institutions and the Islamic and Christian holy sites in the city of Jerusalem, in implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions.

"They stated that the Declaration of Principles, signed in Washington on 13 September 1993, the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip of 28 September 1995 and the establishment of the Palestinian Self-Government Authority constitute a new step in the efforts taken by Palestine and Israel.

"They considered that the arrangements relating to the establishment of Palestinian interim self-government should be widened quickly so that the Declaration of Principles could be implemented as quickly as possible throughout the occupied territories, with a view to securing the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to the establishment of a Palestinian State.

"In this context, they welcomed the conclusion in Taba, Egypt, of the Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, signed in Washington by President Arafat and the Israeli Prime Minister, as an important and substantial step towards the fulfilment of the national rights of the Palestinian people. They expressed the hope that further vigorous steps would be taken for the complete Israeli withdrawal from all the Arab territories occupied in 1967 in order that comprehensive peace and common prosperity would prevail throughout the region.

"They concurred with the Secretary-General that in order to sustain support for the Declaration of Principles and the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, it would be essential to promote economic and social development in the occupied Palestinian territories. In this context, they called upon the participants in the Conference to Support Middle East Peace, which took place in Washington on 1 October 1993, to deliver the assistance pledged, which is vital for the establishment of peace."

In this way the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries reaffirmed its unequivocal and long-standing support for the Palestinian people, in the hope that its just aspirations will soon be fulfilled as a result of its unswerving and exemplary struggle, which the Movement endorses.

Mr. Alakwaa (Yemen) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Despite the complexity of the situation in the Middle East and its multifarious dimensions, we believe that the Palestinian question, considered by the Secretary-General in document A/50/725-S/930, is at the heart of the conflict in the region and it gives us pleasure today, after half a century of handling by the United Nations and by the international community as a whole of this question, to witness the progress the question has made towards a final solution.

We welcome the principal Declaration of Principles and all the subsequent steps and, positive developments on the road to peace; in particular, the Second Interim Agreement to implement the Declaration of Principles on the West Bank and Gaza and to expand Palestinian self-government.

We consider that to be a positive step towards enabling the Palestinian people to enjoy its right to self-determination within the framework of the relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). We believe that, in compliance with those resolutions, the Israeli forces should withdraw from the Palestinian territories those forces have occupied since 1967, the problem of the refugees should be resolved and the Israeli settlements built after 1967 should be dismantled. There should be no infringement of the status of Al-Quds, as it has been agreed to postpone this issue at a later stage. We call upon all States concerned to abide by Security Council resolution 478 (1980) and to refrain from transferring these embassies to Al-Quds. We also call for the implementation of Security Council resolutions concerning the Syrian Golan and South Lebanon. Finally, we call for making it possible for the United Nations to perform a role that would be commensurate with its responsibilities and with the efforts it has been making for about five decades. This would be achieved by enabling the United Nations to participate in the implementation of the Declaration of Principles and in the peace process as a whole. We call upon the United Nations and the international community in general to continue to provide assistance to the Palestinian Authority in order for the Authority to face up to the conditions of economic deterioration, the prevalent poverty and unemployment and to rebuild its economic and social institutions.

In conclusion, we commend the efforts of the Committee in preparing its report (A/50/35).

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The item entitled "Question of Palestine" has been on the agenda of the General Assembly for many years. Consideration of this item at the fiftieth session is particularly important and significant in view of the special background against which it is set, namely a constantly evolving and changing regional peace process.

The Palestinian people are at a crucial moment in their history. It is therefore vital to ensure recognition of the right of the Palestinians to their own State with Jerusalem as its capital and to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination. Likewise, it is essential today, as never before, to end Israeli domination in the occupied territories and to ensure that the provisions of the Declaration of Principles, the Cairo Agreement, the Agreement on Self-Government for the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and all the subsequent implementation agreements are respected and fulfilled in letter and in spirit, together with the terms and phases of the peace process as endorsed in those international instruments.

At the same time, we must ensure the greatest possible political, legal and moral support by the United Nations for the cause of the Palestinian people and all the peoples of the occupied Arab territories and for the peace process in the Middle East. The General Assembly and its subsidiary organs that are involved in the question of Palestine must continue to strive to help eliminate all the obstacles standing in the way of a just and lasting peace in the region. In this respect, the contribution of those organs continues to be decisive in preventing the proliferation of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories, and in preventing violence, repression and the violation of the human rights of the Palestinian people.

The question of Palestine is the core of the conflict in the Middle East. The existence of a climate of *détente* and negotiation for a fair peace in Palestine would serve as a catalyst for the quest for a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the conflict as a whole. In this respect, we welcome the peace agreement signed by Jordan and Israel and we call for Israel's withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan and from the occupied territories in southern Lebanon. Cuba supports the activities of the Permanent Representatives of Senegal and Malta in their capacity as Chairman and Rapporteur respectively of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. This Committee, of which Cuba has the honour of being a member, is doing significant work, which the United Nations should support and strengthen because that is part of its mandate and its objectives.

Our delegation would also like associate itself with the statement by Colombia, as Chairman of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

The Palestinian people and the peoples of the Middle East require of the Committee and of the United

Nations that they play an effective role, a role of true commitment to the peace process, in which the international community has placed its hope. Cuba is ready to continue to do its utmost to contribute to this objective.

Mr. Abdellah (Tunisia) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The United Nations has been seized of the question of Palestine since it adopted the partition resolution in 1947. That resolution provided for the establishment of two States, one Arab and one Israeli, in Palestine. The successive resolutions of the United Nations laid the foundations for settling the Arab-Israeli conflict. It is, therefore, natural for the United Nations to follow the negotiations between the Palestinians and Israelis until such time as those resolutions are implemented. In this manner, it will have discharged its responsibility towards the Palestinian people and will have contributed to the establishment of peace and stability in the Middle East.

The peace efforts in the Middle East have continued over the past year and have achieved encouraging progress, in particular the signing by the Palestinian Interim Self-Governing Authority and the Israeli Government on 28 September 1995 of the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which provides, *inter alia*, for the extension of self-government arrangements to the rest of the West Bank and the holding of free democratic Palestinian elections.

Tunisia has supported the peace process ever since it began in Madrid four years ago. It has participated regularly in the multilateral negotiations and hosted a number of meetings of the specialized working groups and of the committee on coordination of multilateral negotiations. Tunisia, therefore, welcomes the Israeli-Palestinian agreements that have been reached to date as steps towards the full implementation of the Declaration of Principles and in accordance with the agreed timetable. Those measures will strengthen the foundations of Palestinian self-government and lay the groundwork for the implementation and exercise of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people, foremost among which are the rights of return, of self-determination and of establishing that people's independent State on its territory, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Holy Al-Quds is part and parcel of the Palestinian territories that have been occupied by Israel since 1967 and is subject to Security Council resolution 242 (1967), which applies as much to Jerusalem as to rest of the Palestinian territories. The annexation of Al-Quds is illegal, as are the measures taken by the Government of Israel to alter its demographic composition. In this respect, we wish to remind anew of Security Council resolution 478 (1980) on the City of Al-Quds, which rejects the so-called "basic law" on the City of Jerusalem and calls upon those States that have established diplomatic missions at Jerusalem to withdraw such missions from the Holy City. We call upon all Member States to comply with that resolution. The measure that aims at moving the United States Embassy to Al-Quds contravenes international legality, runs counter to United Nations resolutions and even contradicts the Declaration of Principles. Moreover, it constitutes a stumbling block on the road to peace. We highly value the reasoned position taken by the United States Administration in this regard.

The importance of any agreement between the parties must be gauged by the extent to which it is implemented and translated into reality. While we note the Israeli authorities' declaration of readiness to continue to implement the provision of the Interim Agreement of 28 September, we believe that compliance with the agreed timetable is extremely important, given the enormous significance of the forthcoming elections of January 1996 in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to the credibility of the peace process.

Peace in the Middle East is an integral indivisible whole. While we note with satisfaction the conclusion of a peace treaty between Jordan and Israel in 1994, we strongly urge the parties to make progress on the bilateral tracks between Israel and Syria and Israel and Lebanon towards the achievement of full withdrawal from the Golan Heights and southern Lebanon within the framework of a just, lasting and comprehensive solution based on the principle of "land for peace", Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) and other relevant international resolutions. These resolutions contain the basic principles for the establishment of peace in the region, foremost among which is Israel's withdrawal from all the Arab territories occupied since 1967. It was on the basis of those principles that the peace process was launched at Madrid. We call upon Israel to adopt a fresh, forward-looking attitude with regard to its security and its relations with its neighbours with a view to making progress towards the desired peace and to turning a new leaf of cooperation amongst the countries and peoples of the region.

As the international community celebrates the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, my delegation wishes to pay tribute to the important role played by our

Organization in the establishment of the basic principles that today constitute the political and legal terms of reference for the peace efforts. In this regard, we should like to note the work of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People to increase international awareness of the just nature of the Palestinian cause.

I also take this opportunity to pay tribute to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East for its great services. It has a great responsibility in this transitional stage for improving the living conditions of the refugees and for enabling the Palestinians to take responsibility for their own affairs following the transfer of power to the Palestinian Interim Self-Governing Authority. The Agency therefore deserves all financial and moral support if it is to continue to carry out its tasks until such time as the refugee question is settled in a manner that would be consistent with General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

I also wish to express my appreciation for the continuous efforts of the Department of Public Information in promoting awareness of the question of Palestine and the peace efforts in the region. Those efforts should continue in order to keep the world abreast of all new developments in this regard.

The deterioration of socio-economic conditions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is cause for deep concern to us, in particular in view of the measures taken to limit the freedom of movement of Palestinian labourers. The Palestinian Interim Self-Governing Authority must also have sufficient financial means to enable it to discharge its responsibilities. To that end, and in view of the paucity of resources and the lack of basic infrastructure in the self-government areas, it is incumbent upon the international community to intensify its economic and financial support for development projects that would raise the citizens' standards of living.

In this regard, we wish to reaffirm the importance for the many donor countries that made pledges to honour those pledges which accompanied every step of the peace process as their economic importance is not less than that of the political aspects of the peace process; indeed, they are fundamental to its success. In this connection, the United Nations specialized agencies play an important role that deserves every support and encouragement so that they may continue their development work on behalf of the Palestinian people.

We welcome the efforts made to organize international political and financial conferences to lend assistance to the Palestinians, such as that held in Washington, D.C., in early October 1993. We have supported and endorsed the efforts made to establish relations of regional cooperation and development mechanisms in the region. In this regard, the economic conference held in Casablanca, Morocco, in the autumn of 1994 and the economic summit held in Amman in October 1995 have been important steps towards the desired regional cooperation which will reach its full dimensions with the establishment of a just and comprehensive peace in the region.

Tunisia will continue to support the Palestinian people in the reconstruction phase, just as it has in its struggle for the restoration of its legitimate national rights. We shall spare no effort in contributing, both bilaterally and in the multilateral context, to the reconstruction of the Palestinian economy and to the requirements of development. This is a major task that requires concerted international efforts in order for the Palestinian people to be able to enjoy peace, security and well-being like any other people in the Middle East.

Mr. Elaraby (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Once again the General Assembly considers the item entitled "Question of Palestine", which has been on the United Nations agenda for about 50 years — the lifetime of the international Organization. Ever since, this question has taken up a considerable portion of the activities and deliberations of the United Nations.

Though the United Nations has not been able to enforce the implementation of the just solution that would guarantee the exercise by the Palestinian people of its legitimate national rights — it has succeeded in laying the ground rules for such a solution and has contributed to the creation of a climate that has made it possible to make the achievements that we now witness in the context of the peace process.

On the one hand, the consecutive resolutions adopted by the Security Council and by the General Assembly have established the firm foundations upon which any political settlement to the question of Palestine must be based. The most important of these are the non-admissibility of the acquisition of territory by force; the illegality of any measure, including the establishment of settlements, that would change the demographic nature of the occupied territories; and the right of the Palestinian people to exercise its legitimate national rights, including the right to self-determination and the right of refugees to repatriation or compensation.

On the other hand, those resolutions which have continued to be adopted yearly by the different organs of the United Nations have created a world public opinion that has been supportive of the Palestinian people's rights and have stimulated the world's peoples into championing the cause of the Palestinian people and into standing in solidarity with it in its struggle for political independence.

The United Nations has also set up many bodies dedicated to assisting the Palestinian people. Those bodies have helped alleviate the suffering of that people under occupation and have helped the Palestinian refugees in coping with the unbearable conditions of life in the refugee camps.

Furthermore, the peace process which started with the Madrid Conference in 1991, has been based on the frames of reference furnished by the resolutions of the Security Council which have been the launching pad for negotiations between the parties concerned.

In view of the fact that the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations that are now taking place in the context of the present phase of the peace process are still dealing with the transitional phase wherein the Palestinian Authority will take over until the holding of elections and entry upon the final stage of the negotiations, which will begin in May 1996, and which will deal with the questions of Al-Quds, borders, refugees and settlements, it is important indeed to maintain the consistent international posture of support for the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, a posture that is based on the solid legal foundations which govern the legal status of all these issues until such time as the negotiating parties reach agreement on such issues in the context of the final phase of negotiations.

In this respect, reference must be made to the consistent position of the international community on the issue of Al-Quds. This position has been based on solid legal foundations that have been affirmed and reaffirmed by the General Assembly and the Security Council in numerous resolutions of which I mention in particular Security Council resolution 478 (1980), which determines that all the legislative and administrative measures adopted by Israel with the aim of annexing or altering the character and status of the Holy City are null and void. The same resolution calls upon all Member States not to recognize those Israeli measures and not to move their embassies in Israel to the Holy City.

The overwhelming majority of States have abided by this resolution, and we call in particular on the United States of America, as sponsor of the Middle East peace process, to continue to respect the clear international legal position on this question and, regardless of any pressures, to refrain from taking any action towards transferring the United States embassy to Al-Quds. To demand or to implement such a measure will not only constitute a serious breach of international law and a clear violation of Security Council resolutions but would constitute also a serious threat that may undermine the entire peace process.

The agreement on ending the Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip and part of the West Bank is a great achievement in the context of the peace process, which has been making steady progress since the signing in Washington on 15 September 1993 of the Israeli-Palestinian Declaration of Principles which has chartered the way towards restoring the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

We have witnessed recently the signing in Washington on 28 September 1995 of the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip according to which the Israeli forces will withdraw from the Arab cities of the West Bank and the Palestinian people will exercise the right to general elections in a situation free of occupation so that it may manage its own affairs. This first but considerable step towards the national independence for which all Palestinians have struggled has been made possible through the Palestinians' opting for peace and for negotiations as a means for regaining their legitimate national rights.

It was Egypt that pioneered the charting of the road to peace in the Middle East. This has been an arduous road that proved to be full of problems, and the accumulated residue of long years of conflict. Therefore, we in Egypt call upon the international community to stand beside the Palestinian people now more than at any time in the past, and to support the Palestinian people as it takes its first steps on the road to peace.

The Palestinian people, at this important juncture in its history, at the threshold of regaining its legitimate national rights, as it prepares to exercise some of those rights on part of its land, is in need of every possible assistance in all political, economic and other fields. There is no doubt that the United Nations, as representative of the international community, shoulders a special responsibility towards the question of Palestine, and that its various bodies concerned with this question, especially the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, embody the Organization's efforts to discharge that responsibility.

In this respect, we wish to commend the Committee's development of its *modus operandi* in line with the development of the peace process with the aim of responding to the needs of the Palestinian people in the present transitional period. In this respect the delegation of Egypt wishes to extend its thanks and deep appreciation to the Committee's Chairman, Ambassador Kéba Cissé, to the members of the Committee.

We also wish to pay tribute to the positive and vital role of the Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories, Mr. Larsen, who has made use of the vast experience of the United Nations bodies in the various areas of assisting the Palestinian people during the transitional period. We especially welcome the report prepared by the Coordinator on United Nations strategies and projects in six areas of the Palestinian economy, namely education, the creation of job opportunities, health, infrastructure, housing, institution-building and the role of the private sector. In this connection, we should like to underscore the importance for the donor countries to honour their pledges to assist the Palestinian people and for additional resources to be provided for projects that would promote the growth of the Palestinian economy towards self-sufficiency.

Despite all the aforementioned achievements in the peace process, we must always be aware of the difficulties that lie ahead. There must be full commitment by all parties to implement the agreements already reached and determination to continue the peace process on both the Palestinian and the Israeli sides. The questions on the agenda of final negotiations are extremely difficult and require determined political will that puts the desire for peace above the desire for expansion and depends on reconciliation and moderation, rather than on confrontation, extremism and violence. We are fully confident that the supporters of peace in the Middle East, whether in the Arab countries or in Israel, are in the overwhelming majority and that their voice will be heard very clearly indeed by the whole world.

Mr. Dlamini (Swaziland): On behalf of His Majesty the King, the Indlovukazi and the entire nation of the Kingdom of Swaziland, allow me again to express our deepest grief over the sad events that have recently befallen the State of Israel, where they lost a son, a leader and a father. We are joining all the nations of the world to say: May Almighty God sustain them.

On behalf of my delegation, I welcome this opportunity to address the Assembly on agenda item 42.

The report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People is reflective of the road that has been traversed towards the attainment of peace in the Middle East. Obviously, no path of success is ever smooth — hence, the very sad events, indeed tragedies, that have been experienced in the Middle East.

The Kingdom of Swaziland, like other nations, has been observing with keen interest the development of the question of the Middle East. We want to express our gratitude and support for all the United Nations efforts and measures to bring a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement to the Middle East, and we would continue to urge all parties to support such initiatives in the region.

Swaziland will continue to advocate the policy of dialogue between and among all parties and to urge them to put aside the weapons of war. We hold the view that the noble and golden principle of peace can be attained only with the support of all the Member States of the United Nations. It is ever true that no one can win peace through confrontation, only through dialogue. Those who do not realize the need for peaceful dialogue should know that they are the enemies of peace.

My delegation fervently hopes that all peace accords and treaties signed so far will subsist for ever and, indeed, give birth to other peace accords.

As Members of the United Nations we have a duty to encourage the parties directly concerned with the question of peace in the Middle East. Let us support all efforts that will stabilize peaceful measures and refrain from unrewarding condemnations of any of the parties involved. Let us give credit for what has been achieved. We can demonstrate this by promoting resolutions at the United Nations that are far different from those of the past, especially when there was no way open for dialogue.

I want to confirm that peace is an expensive commodity, and if we want to attain it, it is necessary that we as Members of the United Nations change our attitudes, change the way we articulate with regard to this delicate commodity of peace. We must encourage the

State of Israel to remain unswerving in its commitment to honour all the undertakings it has so far pledged to fulfil. We must encourage all the parties in the region that have yet to take part in this endeavour and appeal them to cool tempers and to engage the appropriate gear, the gear of peace.

Mr. Al-Ni'mah (Qatar) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Once again, the General Assembly considers the question of Palestine. This item has figured on the agenda of the United Nations for nearly 50 years. The question has reverberated throughout the world, it has been a source of world concern, it has added to the sufferings of mankind, inflicting as it does a gaping wound on the conscience of humanity. We have witnessed a people lost in the diaspora, suffering from injustice and drinking the bitter cup of alienation and oppression. This is a people that has proceeded along its difficult path, burying its many martyrs and beseeching the world for deliverance, but with no relief in sight. There has been no magic cure for those who have been made unable to see through the thick darkness of the present a glimmer of hope for the future.

Yet throughout the tragedy they have never lost heart or hope. With constant sacrifices, irrigating their soil with blood, they bore their pain with dignity and have continued, in their hearts, to sing paeans to the breaking dawn. Their painful memories and the agony of loss made them stronger. During their days, their years of darkness their only smile was brought on by the succour provided by the United Nations through the many resolutions it continued to adopt over the years in support of the Palestinian people and in defence of their rights. This was the supporting hand of the United Nations. Indeed, it could be said that the United Nations has ingrained Palestinian rights in the conscience of mankind and that the United Nations has made the conscience of Palestine a part of human rights.

At the same time, we know that recognizing rights is one thing and enforcing them is quite another. Enforcement is precisely what the United Nations was unable to achieve, but we acknowledge that the Organization succeeded in laying the foundations for a just solution that will guarantee exercise by the Palestinian people of their legitimate rights. The United Nations also contributed to creating a climate propitious for reaping the long-awaited fruits that are now ripening on the tree of the peace process.

Successive Security Council and General Assembly resolutions have clearly reaffirmed the solid bases on which any political settlement of the question of Palestine must rest. Foremost among those principles is the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force and the illegality of measures leading to change in the character of the occupied territories. These elements apply to all the activities and projects relating to the settlements. Those resolutions have also reaffirmed the right of the Palestinian people to enjoy their legitimate national rights.

Proceeding from this, the United Nations, more than ever before, must ensure full compliance with those resolutions, which will give the Palestinian people hope for peace and confidence in the Organization and inspire them to pursue the path towards peace and to cling to the values, concepts and ideals of peace. The United Nations could thus give the struggling Palestinian people the optimism they need to mobilize their energies to regain all their legitimate national rights, in particular their legitimate right to self-determination and to the establishment on their own sacred soil of an independent State. This would also give the Palestinian people an incentive to contribute to the socio-economic development of all parts of their liberated homeland.

The United Nations must take the lead in coordinating international efforts with a view to focusing them on building institutions and infrastructure for the Palestinian national economy, which has been gravely damaged by the bitter years of occupation, which lasted for far too long in those territories. There is no doubt that the adoption of the relevant United Nations resolutions and, in particular, those of the Security Council contributed to the launching of the peace process at the Madrid conference. Those resolutions have become the most important frames of reference and the strongest possible foundation for negotiations between the parties concerned. Therefore, reaffirming the resolutions that have been and continue to be adopted by the United Nations and its organs will contribute to and support the mobilization of world public opinion in support of the rights of the Palestinian people. It will also mobilize the peoples of the world to continue to stand in solidarity with the Palestinian people until they attain the freedom and political independence they desire.

We are aware of the efforts of the United Nations and the bodies it has established to support the Palestinian people and help them ease the suffering, oppression and pain resulting from the heavy yoke of occupation, and to contribute to improving their standard of living. We fully appreciate the great, praiseworthy efforts made by the United Nations on the question of Palestine. With gratitude, we express our appreciation for the work of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and for the tireless efforts of its Chairman. We hail that Committee's rationalization of its working methods in order to keep pace with developments resulting from the peace process. This will enable the Committee to find new approaches and new ways to serve the Palestinian people and to meet its needs during this important transitional stage.

We also pay tribute to the tireless efforts made by the Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories and his positive role in providing the Palestinian people with the services that would enable them to meet the new needs during this historic transitional period.

It gives me particular pleasure to pay tribute to the report prepared by the Special Coordinator's Office, containing the strategies and the projects of the United Nations in various fields, such as education, labour, health, housing, the establishment of the infrastructure, institution-building and the activation of the private sector's role.

The Palestinian people, in this very delicate and important stage of its glorious struggle for the restoration of all its legitimate national rights and for the exercise of its sovereignty on the liberated parts of its land, is, indeed, in need of all the support it can get and all the sincere international efforts to help it along this path. It needs the contributions of all peace-loving people, the people of goodwill and their assistance for the establishment of the Palestinian state and for the building of its national institutions in various fields — economic, political and social. In this regard, we reaffirm the importance we attach to the continued role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). We urge the officials of the United Nations, and in particular the working group on the financing of UNRWA, to take the necessary measures to reduce the deficit in the Agency's budget without reducing the services it renders.

The State of Qatar, proceeding from the instructions of His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin-Khalifa Al-Thani, the Emir of Qatar, has constantly supported the struggle of the Palestinian people and their legitimate desire to establish a national entity that is dignified with their national identity and the establishment of their independent Palestinian state, with its capital, Al-Quds Al-Sharif. In this regard, my country, like all the other Islamic countries, believes that Al-Quds Al-Sharif has particular importance in any settlement for the Arab-Israeli conflict, in view of its particularly holy place in the hearts of Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

The special ramifications of that question were realized by the Council of Ministers in my country. Therefore, in order to make sure that the peace process continues without any hindrance and with a view to defusing the causes of tension in the region, the Council of Ministers voiced its opposition to and condemnation of any attempt to transfer embassies to the Holy City. The Council of Ministers reaffirmed anew the importance of compliance by the international community with Security Council 478 (1980) and all other relevant resolutions.

The State of Qatar reaffirms its intention to continue to contribute to the support of the efforts aimed at the establishment of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. It will continue to stand by what is right and just. It will continue its sincere efforts to help the Palestinian people to establish their independent state, which will release their energies and allow them to make their full contribution to the progress of the Middle East.

The liberation of the city of Jenin from occupation, and the initiation of withdrawal procedures from Nablus, the largest Palestinian city, are among the fruits of the peace process. It is our hope that this will be followed by the liberation of the rest of the Palestinian territories.

Yet, the achievements made so far in the context of the peace process continue to be fraught with danger and continue to be fragile. The questions on the agenda of negotiations on the final status are many and thorny. This delicate stage makes it incumbent upon all parties to show clear political will and a sincere desire for peace, to show understanding, moderation and wisdom, and to refrain from extremism, confrontation, the arrogance of power, and the ambitions of expansion. Such political will needs the support of all States, the two co-sponsors of the Middle East peace process, and, in particular, the United States of America, which must continue its good offices for the establishment of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. The United Nations must persist in its efforts until such time as the Palestinian people have achieved their desired objective — the establishment of their independent state with Al-Quds as its capital. This would contribute to the establishment of justice, stability, security and prosperity in the Middle East. These hopes of the region's peoples are supported by all the noble values enshrined in the United Nations Charter, and millions of peace-loving people need such support in order to strengthen themselves when hard times befall them. They need this support in order to re-read the first alphabet of human civilization, which was created in the Middle East, whose vocabulary is based on peace, tolerance, cooperation and working together. This is the hope of the peoples of the Middle East — a hope the Holy Koran speaks of:

> "Nor would thy Lord be the one to destroy communities for a single wrong-doing if its members were likely to mend." (Sura 11, Verse 117); as does the Holy Bible: "and on earth peace and good will toward men." (Luke 2:14)

Mr. Kasanda (Zambia): The question of Palestine is a matter that has captured the attention of the international community since 1947, when it was first brought before the United Nations General Assembly.

Since then, the Palestinian people have continued to wage their struggle amidst many obstacles and much human suffering, for the restoration of their lands that are still under occupation.

Given these circumstances, my delegation wishes to applaud the progress that is being made in the ongoing Middle East peace process, which has now culminated in the signing of an Interim Agreement, also known as Oslo II, between the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) at Washington, D.C. on 28 September 1995. This development is one that deserves our collective support, as it is a positive expression of hope that the problems of the Middle East will one day be delivered from the recurring cycle of conflict which has characterized the political life of that region.

Zambia, as a member of the Non-Aligned Movement's Committee of Nine on Palestine, wishes to take advantage of this occasion to urge all parties to the recently concluded agreement to dedicate themselves to ensuring not only that the agreement is effectively implemented, but that it is also adequately translated into improving the living conditions of the inhabitants of the occupied territories. In this context, my delegation wholeheartedly welcomes Israel's withdrawal of its security forces from Jenin and it is our hope that greater progress will also be made in the remaining regions where, unfortunately, tensions still continue on a daily basis.

With regard to the release of Palestinian prisoners, as agreed upon by the two parties, we commend the steps Israel has already taken in this regard. However, we would still urge the Israeli Government to continue its efforts in this direction with greater vigour.

The issue of resettlement of the Palestinian refugees, who were scattered far and wide following the political instability in the Middle East, is a matter that requires urgent attention. The international community should therefore brace itself to assist in the return of such refugees and ensure that they are properly resettled in order to make it easy for them to begin their new life.

However, my delegation also wishes to commend the greater role that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is already playing in facilitating the return of refugees. None the less, given the mammoth task that the Agency has had to shoulder in providing protection as well as humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian refugees for so many years, its financial status has diminished a great deal in recent years, resulting in a deficit of $6 million by the beginning of 1995.

In addition, UNRWA's financial position has also worsened because the Agency is also heavily involved in the process of transferring its headquarters, which has been based in Vienna, to its new location in Gaza.

In conclusion, let me add that we look forward to the comprehensive resolution of the Middle East problem, so as to give the people of the region an opportunity to experience peace and prosperity.

Mr. Sengwe (Zimbabwe): It is my privilege and honour on behalf of my delegation to join today's speakers to address the question of Palestine and, as we did yesterday, mark the important occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. Since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 32/40 in December 1977, the international community has not wavered in its commitment to show its solidarity with the people of Palestine on that occasion. As in the past, Zimbabwe joins the international community in marking that day.

The signing of the historic Declaration of Principles in September 1993 opened a wide vista of opportunities for progress in the Middle East peace process. Although the implementation phase of the Declaration of Principles has admittedly been slow in keeping pace, the peace process in general has since gathered unprecedented momentum.

On 28 September this year, the world witnessed yet another positive step with the signing in Washington of the accord extending Palestinian autonomy in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. What we now hope to see soon is the speedy implementation of law and order and security arrangements to pave the way for the holding of Palestinian elections in those areas.

Those positive developments notwithstanding, Zimbabwe, together with all the peace-loving people of the world, has been shocked by the actions of the enemies of the peace process. The recent brutal assassination of one of the architects of a negotiated settlement and peace in that region, the late Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, is still fresh in our minds.

We have also witnessed with concern intra-party divisions within the respective negotiating teams — divisions that have in some cases manifested themselves in violent killings and other acts of brutality which in the end achieve nothing but to set the clock back and thereby stall the advance towards total Palestinian nationhood and peace in the Middle East.

Zimbabwe, however, takes heart from the fact that, despite these setbacks, the Palestinian and Israeli people, under their respective leaderships, have declared their full commitment to seeing the peace process through to the end. In that respect we stand firmly behind the current peace initiatives, which should lead to what we all pray will be a permanent and comprehensive peace in the whole region.

It is our earnest hope that the Palestinian and Israeli people will today draw further inspiration and commitment from the encouragement and political and moral support we all offer them.

The Acting President *(interpretation from Arabic):* In accordance with General Assembly resolution 3369 (XXX), I now call on the Observer of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

Mr. Ansay (Organization of the Islamic Conference): On behalf of the General Secretariat of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), I thank the Assembly for the opportunity to speak once again during its present session. I do so today on agenda item 42, on the question of Palestine.

The report of the Secretary-General on the question of Palestine is before us in document A/50/725. The report is lucid, concise and clear, and I take this opportunity to express OIC's appreciation to the Secretary-General not only for the timely presentation of the useful material, but also for his continuing untiring efforts towards finding a just and honourable solution of the issue of Palestine. This is one of the longest standing issues on the Assembly's agenda, to which OIC attaches the greatest importance.

I take this opportunity also to pay tribute to the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, His Excellency Ambassador Cissé of Senegal, for his sincere efforts in promoting the cause of the Palestinian people and also for convening yesterday the impressive meeting to commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

The Middle East peace process, launched about four years ago with the objective of achieving a just and comprehensive solution to the question of Palestine and the related conflict in the Middle East, continues to attract the strong support of the OIC. In the year that has passed since I addressed the General Assembly on this issue, the peace process has advanced a few steps forward. The signing of the treaty of peace between Jordan and Israel on 26 October 1994 and the signing of the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement in Washington, D.C., on 28 September 1995 were the high points of these initiatives in this period. In this context, we are heartened by the recent withdrawal of Israeli forces from Jenin.

Following the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza and Jericho and the assumption by the newly established Palestinian National Authority of its functions, the Palestinians have commenced the process of reconstruction and development. They now face the challenging tasks of reviving and modernizing national institutions, designing and developing both the human and the physical infrastructures, and rebuilding the economy by revitalizing agriculture, industry and trade and social services — all with extremely limited resources and formidable impediments. But those challenges cannot be dealt with freely until such time as all the Palestinian territories under illegal Israeli occupation, including the Holy City of Al-Quds Al-Sharif, are fully restored to the Palestinian people and their sovereignty is once again established over the entirety of what has been — and is legitimately — their land.

We are observing with keen interest the ongoing technical assistance of the United Nations and of its funds, programmes and agencies to the Palestinian National Authority and, through it, to the Palestinian people in Gaza and the West Bank, in their rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts. We are in particular mindful of the critical role of the United Nations Special Coordinator, Mr. Larsen, in supporting and facilitating these activities in what continue to be trying conditions. At this juncture I should like also to express our admiration of the role being played by Mr. Ilter Turkmen, the Commissioner General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA), and his staff in enabling the Palestinian refugees under their aegis to cope with their long-standing ordeal. We believe that with its vast experience and excellent dedicated staff UNRWA has a very significant role to play in the future consolidation of Palestine.

With a scarcity of resources, the task of the United Nations funds, programmes and agencies in furnishing the much-needed humanitarian and technical assistance to the Palestinian people in their reconstruction and development efforts is difficult enough. Adding to the international community's costs and frustrations is what can only be described as the non-cooperative attitude of the Israeli authorities, whose difficult bureaucratic formalities, designed to deal with the population of the occupied areas, are continuing to be enforced even after the conclusion of the peace agreements. Similar constraints, we are informed, are being experienced at the hands of Israeli authorities in the promotion of Palestinian trade, especially exports to countries beyond Israel.

These experiences are, at best, at variance with and, at worst, in gross violation of the spirit of compromise and cooperation that must now characterize all current and future dealings between the Palestinian and Israeli authorities in the implementation of the peace agreements. This is all the more important in order to establish the credibility and practicality of the peace agreements already concluded and to generate confidence in the negotiations for future agreements.

We in the OIC would certainly want to continue to encourage and support the ongoing peace process and the conclusion and implementation of succeeding agreements within the framework of that process, but I must point out that this involves essentially a visible change of attitudes and practices. I say this because we would very much like to believe that the difficulties I have just cited are not the reflection of official Israeli policy, but only a neglected carry-over of the way the Palestinians were being dealt with before the conclusion of these. There is an urgent need for a change, and time is of the essence. The time is now.

I should like also to report briefly on some of the highlights of the Annual Coordination Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, held in New York on 2 October 1995, which reaffirmed the OIC's support for the peace process in the Middle East. It called for the continuation of support for the PLO and its National Authority in the ongoing negotiations in order to affirm the transfer of all powers and responsibilities, in all fields, in the occupied Palestinian territories to the Palestinian National Authority, to establish its authority over all the occupied Palestinian territories, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif. It also reaffirmed support for the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people, including their rights to return, to self-determination, and to establish their independent State on their national soil, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital; as well as support for the international programmes for economic, social and cultural development in the occupied territories.

The meeting called for support for the efforts aimed at implementing United Nations resolutions, particularly Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), which stipulate Israel's withdrawal from all the Palestinian and Arab territories, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif, the occupied Syrian Golan Heights and the occupied Lebanese territories. It called upon the international community, particularly the Co-Chairmen of the Peace Conference, to persuade Israel not to carry out any geographic or demographic change in Al-Quds Al-Sharif during the interim phase that might jeopardize the outcome of negotiations on the final status of the city. It called for Israel to be forced to stop Jewish settlement in the occupied Palestine and Arab territories, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif and the occupied Syrian Golan Heights. It called also upon all States to refrain from moving their embassies and other forms of representational offices to Jerusalem pending the restoration of the occupied parts of the city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif to its rightful owner, the state of Palestine.

The meeting emphasized the need to exert efforts in all international forums to compel Israel to release the detainees, bring back the deportees and halt mass punishments. It requested the international community and the Security Council to persuade Israel to comply with the United Nations resolutions, in particular Security

Council resolution 487 (1981), to accede to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and implement the resolutions of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that call for subjecting all Israeli nuclear facilities to the International Atomic Energy Agency system of comprehensive safeguards.

The meeting also reaffirmed that it was necessary for the UNRWA mission for the Palestinian people to continue and for the Reconciliation Committee, in cooperation with UNRWA and the States concerned, to prepare a comprehensive census of Palestinian refugees and their properties.

On the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, which was commemorated yesterday, I bring to you, Sir, on behalf of the Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, His Excellency Mr. Hamid Algabid, a message of peace, a call for reason and an appeal for the extension of all support to the Palestinian people to help alleviate their sufferings caused by long years of occupation and repression and the denial of the exercise of their national human rights. Towards this goal the resolve behind the ongoing peace process must be maintained, and the pace of its progress must be accelerated through the united efforts of the international community in assisting the Palestine National Authority to gain fuller and firmer control over all its nation-building tasks. These would include creating and reviving national institutions, rebuilding and expanding the infrastructure, revitalizing the economy and creating and expanding social services, so that the Palestinian people may re-emerge as a proud, productive, independent, sovereign nation, with its own flag flying over all its territory, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif, and with full status as a Member State of the United Nations.

In the current peace process, the prospects of achieving peace and prosperity for all countries of the Middle Eastern region, including Israel, are within sight. It is incumbent upon the international community represented in this great world Organization to ensure that the opportunity is taken, not lost.

The Acting President (*interpretation from Arabic*): I wish to inform members that the General Assembly will consider draft resolutions submitted under agenda item 82 at a later date, to be announced in the *Journal*.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.

United Nations A/50/PV.76

General Assembly

Fiftieth Session

Official Records

76th plenary meeting
Friday, 1 December 1995, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral . . . . (Portugal)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Peerthum, (Mauritius), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda item 44

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General (A/50/574)

Draft resolutions (A/50/L.24, A/50/L.37, A/50/L.38)

The Acting President: I call on the representative of Norway to introduce draft resolution A/50/L.24.

Mr. Biørn Lian (Norway): I take great pleasure in introducing, together with the Russian Federation and the United States of America, draft resolution A/50/L.24, on the Middle East peace process. The following countries have joined as sponsors of this draft resolution: Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Belize, Bolivia, Bulgaria, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, El Salvador, Finland, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kazakstan, Luxembourg, Myanmar, the Netherlands, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Singapore, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Ukraine and Uruguay.

The draft resolution is a follow-up to resolutions 48/58 and 49/88. It welcomes and gives full support to the achievements of the peace process so far and includes references to the agreements and treaties entered into during the past year.

The past year has seen great achievements in the Middle East peace process. The Interim Agreement between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which was finalized in Taba, Egypt, and signed in Washington on 28 September, was a major accomplishment of the peace process. This Agreement, as well as the peace process in general, has produced remarkable results not only among the various peoples, but also within the region as a whole. One important consequence of the Interim Agreement is the Palestinian elections due to be held on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip in January 1996. Another is the Israeli redeployment from the West Bank town of Jenin earlier this month. We all hope that the current momentum will continue and that the final-status negotiations will begin, as scheduled, in the spring of 1996.

But we have also seen violent attempts from both sides to undermine the peace process. The tragic death of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on 4 November is a reminder that the peace process demands not only commitment and a clear vision of the future, but also considerable courage. We wish Prime Minister Shimon Peres and Chairman Yasser Arafat every success in the time to come. No one thought in 1993 that the road ahead would be smooth. It is not, but most Palestinians

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and Israelis know that this is the only road to a better future and that there is no way back.

Another milestone along the road to comprehensive peace in the Middle East was the Economic Summit held in the Jordanian capital, Amman, last month. The Summit assembled some 1,500 businessmen and politicians from many countries in the Middle East and North Africa, as well as the rest of the world. Who could have imagined such an event only a few years ago? Who could have imagined an event such as the Barcelona Euro-Mediterranean Conference, held earlier this week? Such events radiate optimism and, in turn, inspire our optimism about the future. The Declaration of the Amman Summit is welcomed in the last preambular paragraph of the draft resolution.

However, the incidents that have taken place in southern Lebanon and in northern Israel lately are a reminder that there is still much to be done before we have a comprehensive peace in the region. The Syrian-Israeli track has also failed to produce any results so far. Paragraph 4 of the draft resolution stresses the need to achieve rapid progress on the other tracks of the Arab-Israeli negotiations within the peace process.

A peace agreement between Israel and Syria will be a major contribution to a lasting peace in the Middle East, and we hope that the statements made by the Foreign Ministers of Israel and Syria in Barcelona this week will prove to be a new start in the negotiations between the two countries.

An important element of the draft resolution before the Assembly is the call to Member States to expedite economic, financial and technical assistance to the Palestinian people during the interim period, as well as to the parties in the region, and to render support for the peace process. Economic development in the region is vital. Peace and stability at the regional level are not easy to achieve without peace on the domestic level, and vice versa. The international community can help achieve this. The new climate of coexistence and cooperation in the Middle East and North Africa must be protected and expanded, and this can be done by mobilizing financial resources to help the peoples concerned to develop their institutions, infrastructures and economies, and thus to be able to stand on their own feet. They should also be encouraged to engage in regional and international trade.

Economic development is particularly important among the Palestinians. The high unemployment rate in the Gaza Strip and on the West Bank is a serious problem. Peace will remain vulnerable if it does not produce tangible results for the people concerned. This peace process must be accompanied and strengthened by economic and social development and, as Chairman of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for aid to the Palestinians, Norway follows development in the Palestinian areas closely. Economic development in the Palestinian areas this year has been better than previously expected, but it is extremely important that the international community continue to assist the Palestinian people in the economic and social fields. The forthcoming donor conference in Paris for aid to the Palestinians will be decisive in mobilizing support for much-needed development in the area.

Operative paragraph 7 points to the positive contribution that an active United Nations role can have in the Middle East peace process and in assisting in the implementation of the Declaration of Principles. Norway highly appreciates the strong United Nations support of the peace process. United Nations agencies such as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), as well as the United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories, Mr. Terje Rod Larsen, have given invaluable assistance to the Palestinians. The continuity and strengthening of their activities is of utmost importance to secure peace, prosperity and stability in the Middle East.

It is not only natural but also necessary that the debates and resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly reflect and support the positive developments in the Middle East. We should therefore concentrate our efforts on enlarging the common ground. Norway would like to reaffirm its readiness to continue to play its part in assisting the peace process in the Middle East.

The Middle East is abundant with human and natural resources. These resources can be used to create vital and prosperous societies, or to wage wars. Wars have been tried, with devastating results each time. This time peace is being tried, and the results after only two years are concrete and convincing.

The purpose of this draft resolution is not only to welcome the achievements of the peace process so far, but also to register the strong support of the United Nations Members for further efforts towards a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. Many important issues remain to be solved. The resolution does not mention issues subject to negotiation between the parties. The same was true of last year's version. We believe that this Assembly should continue to be careful not to add to, nor detract from, what only the parties themselves can decide. We do, however, consider it vitally important that at this critical stage the world community expresses its continued support for the peace process through the United Nations General Assembly. We therefore recommend this draft resolution for unanimous adoption by the Assembly.

The Acting President: I call on the representative of the Russian Federation, who also will introduce draft resolution A/50/L.24.

Mr. Fedotov (Russian Federation) (*interpretation from Russian*): The delegation of the Russian Federation, as a co-sponsor of the peace process in the Middle East, has the honour, together with the delegations of Norway and the United States of America, to introduce the draft resolution contained in document A/50/L.24.

Its major objective is to reinforce the successes achieved during the peace process in the Middle East and to orient the sides towards the speedy implementation of the agreements that have been signed.

We note with great satisfaction that during the course of the past year, enormous efforts have been made to achieve a decisive turning-point for the better in the evolution of the situation in the Middle East. The "treasure chest" of peace in this region has been supplemented by numerous achievements, including the agreement on the further transfer to the Palestinians of civil powers on the West Bank of the Jordan River.

Despite persistent difficulties, and the resistance of extremists, what we are witnessing now is a movement towards the establishment here of relations of peace, good-neighbourliness and cooperation. We are gratified to note that the peace process, which began in Madrid with, *inter alia*, the co-sponsorship of Russia, is now beginning to yield concrete results for the peoples of the region that are strengthening trust and interaction. A real reaffirmation of this was the Middle East/North Africa Economic Summit held at Amman, which was called upon to lay down reliable bases for regional cooperation and in so doing to prepare the region for the advent of the twenty-first century.

Russia favours a comprehensive and just solution to all aspects of the Arab-Israeli conflict, without detriment to any of the parties. This is precisely the logic that underlies the Madrid formula for the peace process. We are convinced that expansion of the sphere of Palestinian autonomy and the forthcoming elections to the Palestinian Council will become an important milestone in implementing the hopes and aspirations of all Palestinians.

To ensure forward progress towards peace, including the establishment of Palestinian self-government, there is a need for external material support. In this respect, the draft resolution contains an appeal to Member States during the transition period to extend economic, financial and technical assistance to the Palestinians. Russia, for its part, is assisting the Palestinians, *inter alia*, by equipping and strengthening the Palestinian police and security forces. We also intend in all possible ways to promote the economic rebirth of this region, including the implementation of the projects indicated.

Of great importance also is the provision of the draft resolution to the effect that an active United Nations role in the Middle East peace process and in assisting in the implementation of the Declaration of Principles can make a positive contribution. We believe that our Organization and its specialized bodies, first and foremost UNRWA, UNDP and UNICEF, have extensive experience in carrying out various types of humanitarian and technical programmes in the occupied territories, and that their potential could be extremely useful during the process of the implementation of the Declaration of Principles.

The transformation of the Middle East into a zone of stability will not take on final form without progress on the Syrian-Israeli and Lebanese-Israeli negotiating tracks. It is expressly for that reason that the draft resolution stresses the need to achieve rapid progress on the other tracks of the Arab-Israeli negotiations. This also requires dialogue, the goodwill of the parties and the support of the international community. In this context, we are concerned by the unjustifiable delay on the Syrian track.

The degree of success achieved will to a great extent depend on a solution to the Lebanese-Israeli problem, which has its own specific characteristics and its own international legal foundation for a settlement. The basis for this continues to be Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which provides for respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon, the withdrawal of Israel from the south of that country, and also the need to protect the security of the northern regions of Israel.

We are convinced that the adoption of this balanced draft resolution will give political support to efforts to establish a post-confrontational Middle East, based on broad international cooperation and the accelerated economic development of that region. Russia attaches great importance to the multilateral aspect of the peace process, which is becoming increasingly concrete, and counts on the United Nations and its Security Council to continue in all possible ways to promote the progress of the Middle East peace process in all domains.

We hope that this draft resolution will receive the backing of all States.

The Acting President: I call on the representative of the United States of America, who also will introduce draft resolution A/50/L.24.

Mr. **Gnehm** (United States of America): The draft resolution that we introduce today provides an opportunity for the United Nations General Assembly to reaffirm its support for the Middle East peace process, a process inaugurated over four years ago in Madrid.

Since that historic beginning, we have witnessed the 13 September 1993 Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, signed by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, the 4 May 1994 Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho area, the 29 August 1994 Agreement on Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities, the Jordan-Israel Treaty of Peace of 26 October 1994, the Protocol on Further Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities, signed at Cairo on 27 August 1995, and the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip, signed by the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization at Washington, D.C. on 28 September 1995.

All constitute significant steps on the way towards achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. It is necessary and appropriate that the world offer its encouragement to the parties as they work to overcome the legacy of a past marked by hatred, war, suspicion and distrust. It is also imperative for the world to support the parties as they face the unending challenge of those on both sides who would, by violence and terrorism, undermine and reverse the strides made by the parties thus far.

That continuing challenge was demonstrated clearly in the tragic assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who committed himself to the peace of the brave and lost his life in pursuit of that noble endeavour. Despite this tragedy, we have seen the resilience of the process that was set in motion in Madrid and the rededication of those committed to the peace process. Only weeks ago, Israel handed full authority of the West Bank town of Jenin to the Palestinian authorities. More transfers of authority are currently taking place, in fulfilment of obligations under the various agreements.

The parties are committed to a resolution of their differences through negotiations, despite the brutal and bloody efforts of those who cannot stand the thought that peace and reconciliation are no longer the unattainable visions of a few dreamers. The recent Economic Summit in Amman also served as testimony to what peace can mean for the peoples of this region.

We hope that Lebanon and Israel and Syria and Israel will also achieve progress in their negotiations. In addition, I wish to reaffirm my Government's commitment to Lebanon's political independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. Those objectives were set forth in Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which my Government supports.

My Government has been intensively involved in numerous efforts to see that appropriate economic assistance is channelled in support of peace. This draft resolution clearly reflects the world community's view that such assistance for development is a crucial priority and should be fostered by the international community.

This draft resolution is a clear signal to the parties that the international community recognizes and supports their courageous efforts to reshape the world that future generations will grow up in. It is also recognition of what they have achieved by negotiating directly with regard to their differences.

The United States is proud once again to have worked with the representatives of Russia, Norway and many other nations in sponsoring this resolution. We invite the representatives of all States to join in expressing support for a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

The Acting President: I now call on the representative of Morocco to introduce draft resolution A/50/L.37.

Mr. Snoussi (Morocco) (*interpretation from French*): The delegation of Morocco, which is presiding over the Arab Group for the month of December, has the honour to introduce the draft resolution in document A/50/L.37, dealing with Jerusalem, on behalf of the following sponsors: Afghanistan, Algeria, Bangladesh, Djibouti, Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Kuwait, Malaysia, Mauritania, Morocco, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

It should be pointed out, first of all, that the text of this draft resolution is identical to that of resolution 49/87 A, adopted during the forty-ninth session. In the operative part of this draft resolution, the General Assembly notes the illegality of Israel's decision to impose its law, jurisdiction and administration on the Holy City of Jerusalem and deplores the transfer by certain States of their diplomatic missions to Jerusalem, in disregard of Security Council resolution 478 (1980), and their refusal to comply with the provisions of that resolution. The draft resolution once again calls upon those States to abide by the provisions of the relevant United Nations resolutions and, finally, requests the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session on the implementation of the draft resolution to be adopted.

In conclusion, my delegation hopes that the draft resolution I have just introduced will meet with general agreement and will be adopted without a vote.

The Acting President: Before calling on the next speaker, I should like to propose that the list of speakers in the debate on this item be closed at 12.30 p.m.

It was so decided.

The Acting President: I therefore request those representatives wishing to participate in the debate to inscribe their names on the list as soon as possible.

Mr. Elaraby (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The Middle East region is in transition. It is leaving behind an era of war and conflict to start an era of just and comprehensive peace between the peoples of this important region. Because of this period of transition, all the parties concerned with the stability and prosperity of the region bear an added responsibility.

We should not convince ourselves that progress in the peace process will continue automatically or that it is unavoidable. On the contrary, we think that all the parties concerned are required to move the negotiation process forward, because the wide support the peace process has enjoyed so far has been linked in people's minds with the great expectation of regaining lands and rights, putting an end to bloodshed and initiating genuine regional cooperation towards arms control and the development of the region's economies with the aim of raising the standards of living of its peoples and putting an end to the suffering of those who have languished under occupation. These expectations have to be realized if genuine peace is to prevail.

Any objective evaluation of the peace process which began at the Peace Conference on the Middle East, held in Madrid four years ago, must highlight the accomplishments made so far in the context of that process. Most importantly, there is the agreement amongst the parties that the aim of the negotiations is full honest compliance with the frames of reference upon which the peace process has been founded. Those include Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) whose real content is the achievement of comprehensive peace between the Arabs and Israel in return for withdrawal by Israel from all the Arab territories it occupied in 1967, and the exercise by the Palestinian people of its legitimate national rights.

The negotiations have resulted in mutual recognition and a Declaration of Principles by the Palestinians and the Israelis. This Declaration of Principles has been followed by other agreements and steps to implement it. Most recently the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip was signed in Washington on 28 September 1995. According to that Agreement, Israeli forces will withdraw from Arab cities in the occupied territories and thereby make it possible to hold free Palestinian elections and pave the way towards the negotiations on the final status which, we hope, will put a definite end to Israeli occupation and lay the foundations for the Palestinian people's political independence. Jordan has also signed a peace treaty with Israel.

There are at present attempts to achieve similar progress in the peace process on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks and two summit meetings have also been held on regional and economic cooperation, in Casablanca and Oman. Egypt looks forward to hosting a third summit in 1996.

The movement towards peace is an indivisible whole. Such movement can lead to success only if it encompasses all aspects of the relations of the Middle East countries. Normal economic relations, for instance, cannot exist, grow and be stable under conditions of occupation by Israel of some Arab Lands. Also, regional cooperation in the interests of the prosperity of peoples will never succeed in the existence of the concepts of hegemony, the dreams of military superiority or the illusion of achieving security through the occupation of the lands of others.

Comprehensive complete and just peace is the real guarantee of the security of all parties. There is no doubt that the possession of nuclear weapons by one State in the Middle East threatens the peace and security of the entire region and increases the possibilities of proliferation of such weapons to other countries in the region.

That is why Egypt has continued to call for the establishment of a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East and the establishment of a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction. This is an objective that is supported by the international community as a whole but, unfortunately, no progress has been made towards its achievement because Israel, who had insisted on direct negotiations with the countries concerned before such a zone could be established now refuses to enter into any negotiations on arms limitation in the nuclear field within the multilateral working group on arms limitation and regional security. Israel also refuses to take any confidence-building measures to demonstrate its seriousness in the nuclear field.

Egypt engaged in the peace experiment under very difficult circumstances and made enormous sacrifices that have not deterred it from pursuing the search for peace. Now, the Peace Treaty between Egypt and Israel, which embodies the sound translation of the land-for-peace principle, all the land for peace, stands as a towering model. We in Egypt are very proud of this pioneering experiment without which it would have been impossible for the present peace process to begin or to succeed.

While we welcome all the positive developments in the context of the peace process, we are well aware of the threats that beset all peace efforts in the Middle East. A few weeks ago, the Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin, was assassinated by one of the Israeli extremists, the same Israeli extremists who assassinated scores of Palestinians while they prayed in the El-Khalil Mosque. We deplore bloodshed wherever it may take place. Such horrific actions are reminders to us all that these enemies of peace are prepared to go to any length and to resort to the most extreme acts of violence in trying to achieve their aims and this is exactly what all of us should agree to reject and to take all legitimate measures to condemn, to oppose and to curb.

In conclusion, we wish to reaffirm that the achievement of peace requires that every party should abide by its international commitments. We hope that the Israeli Government will continue to abide by the commitments agreed, as is the case at present with regard to the Palestinian party. We look forward to a more positive posture in the negotiations with both Syria and Lebanon. The strongest and most eloquent retort to those who would assassinate peace in the Middle East is to speed up the achievement of peace.

Mr. Al-Dosari (Bahrain) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The Middle East is one of the world's sensitive areas in view of its importance and its impact on international peace and security. Therefore, the establishment and consolidation of peace in the region is a very important matter for the countries of the world, in view of the repercussions on other regions of the world. In order to establish peace and security in the Middle East, the international community has to find a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict. My country's delegation wishes to stress that the peace process in the Middle East must be comprehensive and integrated because it is not feasible to focus on peace and development in one part of the region while the situation remains hanging in the air in other parts of the same region.

That is why due attention must be paid to all tracks in order to guarantee the comprehensive and just settlement in the region. This cannot be achieved if the settlement is partial and incomplete. My country's delegation also wishes to point out that any settlement must be accompanied by an integrated approach to enabling the Palestinian people to exercise its inalienable rights, since the question of Palestine is at the core of the conflict in the region.

The peace process in the Middle East that began four years ago has made important progress on the road to peace, as highlighted by the accord reached in Washington, D.C., which led to the signing on 13 September 1993 of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements and, on 26 October 1994, of the Jordan-Israel Peace Treaty. These agreements were in turn followed by the signing on 28 September 1995, of the Interim Agreement on the West

Bank and Gaza Strip, the second phase of the Declaration of Principles on the extension of self-government arrangements. This Agreement calls for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the West Bank and Gaza Strip, thereby allowing the Palestinian people to exercise its right to hold free and democratic elections.

Optimism is the watchword of the day. It must prevail, despite the ongoing Israeli settlement policies aimed at altering the demography of the occupied Arab territories, especially in the city of Al-Quds. Bahrain welcomes all the positive developments and wishes to reaffirm its support for the peace process in the Middle East. It promises to endorse any effort to achieve a just, comprehensive and lasting peace on the basis of the land-for-peace principle and of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) which call for Israel's withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories, including the Holy City of Al-Quds.

Since the Middle East peace process began, the international community has closely followed the positive developments in the question of Palestine and the Jordanian track. Unfortunately, however, no real progress has been made on the Syrian track. As we have just said, no just, lasting and comprehensive peace can be achieved without Israel's full withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan and the dismantling of settlements in accordance with the resolutions of the international community. Bahrain, therefore, wishes to reaffirm its support for Syria's position on recovering full sovereignty over its territory occupied in 1967 in the Golan Heights.

We also wish to refer here to the importance of preserving Lebanon's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally-recognized borders. We call for the activation of the peace process on the Lebanese track and urge Israel to implement Security Council resolution 425 (1978) which calls for withdrawal of Israel's forces from the Lebanese territories.

Unfortunately, Israel continues to develop its nuclear programmes outside international supervision. We believe that this is an obstacle to peace, security and stability in the region and we, therefore, call upon Israel to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to subject all its nuclear installations to the safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency. That would help to build confidence, which is one of the underpinnings of the peace process.

The Middle East is entering upon a new era. Negotiations are underway to settle all issues among all the countries of the region within the framework of international legality. These are extremely positive developments and we therefore feel that all peace-loving countries in the Middle East must promote the peace process and help to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace on all tracks in the region.

Mr. Yaacobi (Israel): I feel obliged to begin my speech this year by referring to the brutal assassination of the Prime Minister of Israel, Yitzhak Rabin, less than one month ago. This event traumatized the State of Israel and sent shock waves throughout the entire Middle East and the whole world. Israel lost a leader, a man who devoted his life to the defence of the State of Israel. He will be remembered as a soldier who fell in the battle for peace.

Despite the pain of Rabin's assassination, the people of Israel and the Government of Prime Minister Peres are determined to push forward and achieve a comprehensive regional peace in the Middle East. We will not allow terrorists from any quarter to stop the peace process. This is our commitment.

We have been travelling long in our search for peace. The policies that Yitzhak Rabin's Government pursued led to dramatic breakthroughs in Israel's relationships with its neighbours. The ultimate achievement was the signing of the Declaration of Principles with the PLO on 13 September 1993. The process which began on that date represents the best, perhaps the only, opportunity the peoples of our region have for peaceful coexistence. When Israel and the Palestinians signed the Declaration of Principles, we chose to reshape our future by taking history into our own hands. We chose to transform decades of conflict into a new era of peace and cooperation.

The subsequent agreements reached by Israel and the Palestinians — the Gaza-Jericho Agreement and the Interim Agreement, Oslo B — are forging a new reality in the Middle East. Another significant event was the signing of a peace treaty with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in October 1994. Israel now has working relations with other Arab and Muslim States in North Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Africa.

At this time, I would like to reiterate the invitation issued at this rostrum less than two months ago by then Foreign Minister, now Prime Minister, Shimon Peres:

> "I would like to use this occasion to turn to the Syrians and to turn to the Lebanese and ask them to stop hesitating, to stop wandering ... Experience has shown that through negotiation on all levels, embracing all issues without timidity, without fatigue, we can achieve peace." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Plenary Meetings, 14th meeting, pp. 4 and 5)*

Syria and Lebanon need peace as much as Israel and the rest of the Middle East. Peace will allow them and us to invest in people instead of weapons; in security instead of war; in economy and development instead of confrontation. There is no way other than through direct negotiations at the decision-making level. This is how peace was achieved with Egypt and Jordan; this is how understanding and agreements were achieved with the PLO. If Syria follows this course, peace will be achieved.

The international community should give expression to and voice its support for the changes in the Middle East. We support very much the draft resolution on the Middle East peace process proposed by Norway, the Russian Federation and the United States of America. At the same time, Israel will continue to oppose attempts to bring to this body issues that should be discussed bilaterally between the parties themselves, as was concluded at the Madrid Conference.

We believe that the peace that we are recreating with our neighbours will translate into full regional cooperation. Last year a process of extensive regional economic cooperation began with the convening, in Casablanca, of the first Middle East/North Africa economic summit, under the auspices of His Majesty King Hassan of Morocco. Last month a second summit was held in Amman, under the auspices of His Majesty King Hussein of Jordan. Two thousand participants came from 61 countries, including most of the countries of the Middle East and many Muslim countries outside our region.

The goals of the summit, as outlined in the Amman Declaration, were

> "to facilitate the expansion of private-sector investment in the region, to cement a public-private partnership which will ensure that end, and to work to enhance regional cooperation and development."

At the summit, business leaders from Israel, many Arab States and Muslim States outside the region concluded a number of projects that will

> "help augment the productive capacity of the region and contribute to its broad-based economic development."

Government representatives agreed to establish in Cairo, Egypt, a Bank for Economic Cooperation and Development in the Middle East and North Africa. Next year's economic summit will be held in Cairo, and the following one in Qatar.

Peace and development are leading us to a better future. Those who are trapped in the past punish future generations and deprive them of peace and prosperity. In the long run, we believe, regional cooperation is the best way. I believe that the opportunities for regional cooperation are great. Through regional cooperation, we can gradually work towards a Middle East common market. Through regional cooperation, we can establish a coordinated network of infrastructure, including ports, airports, railways and energy plants, electricity grids, phone networks and computer communications. Through regional cooperation, we are opening borders for tourism. Not only can open tourism create hundreds of thousands of jobs; it can create built-in interests to preserve peace.

The path before us is difficult, but our destination is clear: peace and security, cooperation and prosperity. Israel, Jordan, Egypt and the Palestinians, together with other Middle Eastern and Maghreb countries, are already working together. The international community must help to ensure that this is the future of the Middle East.

Prior experience has taught us that agreements between leaders are not enough, and that peace means more than just the absence of war. We have always believed that a peaceful environment will enable all countries in the region to divert their human energies and economic resources away from conflict and towards better education, health, human progress, science, technology and economic development.

Peace and stability will not only save lives and money; they will generate growth. Shifts from military to civilian expenditure will create economic and human progress. And the threat of war will no longer deter foreign investment and tourism. We can divert $30 billion annually away from armaments and other costs of conflict in the Middle East. This money can be better spent on education and health and on human and economic development.

Israel feels that the United Nations has an important role to play in fostering the bilateral agreements and in promoting multilateral projects. Israel has been cooperating fully with the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and the United Nations Children's Fund, and with other international organizations as well, in implementing programmes aimed at improving the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza. We welcome and encourage their continued participation.

During the last three years we have seen a positive change in United Nations resolutions referring to the Middle East, the most important of which is the resolution regarding the Middle East peace process which was presented today. But there are still resolutions that are contrary to the new reality in the region. We expect that the States Members of the United Nations will eliminate these anachronistic resolutions from the General Assembly's agenda. The time has come to refrain from the rhetoric of years gone by.

In his address to the Special Meeting of the General Assembly commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, the late Prime Minister of Israel, Yitzhak Rabin, said:

> "We are grateful to the international community for its encouragement at this historic moment which is unfolding on our little plot of land ...
>
> "The road is still long. However, we are determined to continue until we have brought peace to the region, for our children and our children's children and for all the peoples of the region. This is our mission. We will fulfil it." *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Plenary Meetings, 39th meeting, p. 26)*

Yitzhak Rabin gave his life in pursuit of this vision.

It is our obligation to continue on this course. Israel's new Government, headed by Prime Minister Shimon Peres, is committed to peace and will continue to work in its pursuit. This is our policy; this is our hope. It has to be the obligation and the goal of the entire international community.

Mr. Al-Ameire (United Arab Emirates) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I have pleasure in thanking the Secretary-General for the way in which he has strengthened and increased the effectiveness of the role of the United Nations in promoting peace and security in the Middle East region.

The fact that the General Assembly is considering the situation in the Middle East today, under agenda item 44, reaffirms the international community's resolve to give momentum to the peace process in the region and to ensure the achievement of its objectives, in keeping with the changes that have taken place in the region and on the international scene.

Although about four years have now passed since the peace process began in Madrid with the aim of achieving comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East region, on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) and the land-for-peace principle, it is rather disappointing that the peace process has not made any progress on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks because of the Israeli Government's reneging on the commitments it took upon itself at the Madrid Conference and its disregard for the realities of the present situation in the region.

The United Arab Emirates which welcomed the convening of the Madrid Peace Conference and took part in the multilateral negotiations, has followed closely the four tracks of the Arab-Israeli negotiations and has welcomed the signing of the Declaration of Principles on self-government and the subsequent agreements between the Palestinian National Authority and Israel as well as the signing of the Peace Treaty between Jordan and Israel. At the same time, we find that the achievement of a comprehensive and just peaceful settlement in the Middle East region requires progress in the negotiations on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks.

From this rostrum, my country reiterates its support of the just and legitimate positions of the Syrian and Lebanese Governments in their quest to regain their occupied territories in the Syrian Golan and southern Lebanon on the basis of relevant United Nations resolutions and the land-for-peace principle. My Government also considers that all the steps and measures taken by the Israeli occupation authorities with the aim of altering the legal status and demographic character of the Palestinian and Arab occupied territories, particularly with regard to Al-Quds, are null and void and constitute a serious breach of international law.

Peace, security, stability and development in the Middle East require the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction in the region, including nuclear weapons. Proceeding from this, the United Arab Emirates calls upon Israel to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and to place all its nuclear facilities under the safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) as a confidence-building step in the region. We also reaffirm the importance of a continued role by the United Nations and its specialized agencies in the peace process and call upon Israel to honour its commitments under relevant resolutions of international legality in the interests of a better future of peace, tolerance, human development and economic and social development in the region.

Mr. Alakwaa (Yemen) (*interpretation from Arabic*): In his statement in the General Assembly on 11 October 1995, my country's Minister for Foreign Affairs stated that:

> "just and lasting peace will remain contingent upon complete Israeli withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories, particularly the Syrian Golan and South Lebanon, in accordance with United Nations resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1972) and 425 (1978) and in line with the principle of land for peace". *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Plenary Meetings, 28th meeting, p. 15)*

Although we fully support the progress made and the success achieved by the peace process so far on the other Arab and Israeli tracks, we continue to believe that it is extremely important and necessary to make similar progress on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks.

In the interests of brevity, I shall limit my statement to the two subjects to which the Secretary-General refers in his report (A/50/574), namely the status of the Syrian Golan Heights and the city of Al-Quds.

With regard to the Syrian Golan, Israel's continued occupation of that region is a flagrant and clear breach of the norms of international law, in particular the Hague Convention of 1907 and its relevant Annexes and the terms of the 1949 Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. That continuing occupation is also a violation of Security Council resolution 497 (1981) and of the principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of the land of others by force.

With regard to the status of Al-Quds, Israel's declaration that that City is Israel's eternal capital is in conflict with Security Council resolution 478 (1980), which decided not to recognize either Israel's "basic law" or the changes made by Israel with regard to the character and status of Al-Quds.

We agree with the Secretary-General's view that these two questions remain urgent. In our opinion the international community must shoulder its responsibilities and remain committed to finding a solution to the two questions in a manner that will take into account both justice and the rights of all the parties. Member States as well as the States directly concerned are legally committed to maintaining their embassies where they are currently located and not to transfer them to Al-Quds. We appeal to those States that have already made such transfers to withdraw their embassies from that City until an agreement is reached between the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Government of Israel on the final status of the City of Al-Quds.

Mr. Razali (Malaysia): In the statement of the Malaysian delegation two days ago on the question of Palestine, we, along with others, welcomed the positive developments that have taken place in that region, specifically in the occupied Palestinian territories.

As a result of the courageous and forward-looking decisions of leaders in the region, and with active encouragement from the international community, major milestones have been achieved in the Middle East peace process. The Palestinian-Israeli and Jordan-Israeli agreements demonstrate the continuing commitment of the parties to promoting peace in the Middle East. We hope that these encouraging developments will generate momentum for progress on the Syrian-Israeli and Lebanese-Israeli tracks of the Middle East peace talks, leading to a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Mutual agreement between Israel and the other two Arab countries is another essential prerequisite for peace in the Middle East. In this regard, we share these views expressed by the Secretary-General in his report:

> "Hope has been generated by these encouraging signs that progress can be accelerated in the Israeli-Lebanese and Israeli-Syrian negotiations leading to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978)." *(A/50/1, para. 739)*

The Malaysian delegation welcomes the agreement reached between the late Prime Minister of Israel and

President Assad of Syria in June 1995 on the next steps to be taken to move the Syrian-Israeli track to a new and more intensive phase. In our view, maintaining the dialogue between the parties concerned, with the support of the international community, is an important contribution to peace. It is also our hope that such dialogue will lead to the withdrawal of the Israeli forces from the occupied Syrian Golan, consistent with Security Council resolution 497 (1981).

My delegation remains concerned over the various acts of violence and the hostilities perpetrated in southern Lebanon, which have led to many casualties among civilians. While recognizing that the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) has to a certain extent contributed to stability in the area, we affirm that peace can only endure if the return of the effective authority of the Lebanese Government in the area where the Israeli forces remain in Lebanon is ensured. Any policy of neutralizing areas outside one's own territory by way of ensuring one's own security, which is a mind-set of the past, is clearly unacceptable.

In his statement two days ago to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the President of the General Assembly stated that the attainment of political, economic and social justice by the Palestinian people was essential to the achievement of a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. The Malaysian delegation completely supports this point of view. It is unconscionable to consider projects and plans for the advancement of the region while the Palestinians encounter serious obstacles in alleviating their economic and social situation. The Palestinian issue remains the crux of the Middle East problem. In this connection the steps currently under way must lead to the establishment of a Palestinian homeland and a durable solution to the question of the status of Jerusalem.

In our statement last year on this item, we emphasized that peace in the Middle East must mean the flowering of development, the full expression of rights, the empowerment of the people, and commitments to equity and social justice. To achieve this, there is a need for effective, collective and forthcoming international assistance. Recent efforts by the leaders in the region to promote development, especially through enhanced trade and economic ties involving the private sector and private capital flows, should be welcomed by the international community.

In many ways the Middle East has remained one of the few parts of the world still suffering from a lack of development. The reason is obvious. However, with the historic breakthroughs for peace in the last two years, there are real and serious prospects for change. Indeed current developments there have demonstrated that no issue is intractable and that no issue is beyond solution. We hope that Israel will take this golden opportunity to forge lasting ties with its Arab neighbours by resolving the outstanding obstacles to genuine, just and lasting peace. The tragic loss of its leader, Yitzhak Rabin, sacrificed at the altar of peace, should consolidate commitment to further steps on the road towards peace and security, which will enhance the prospects for progress and the development of the region.

As in the past, Malaysia will support any process that will advance and realize the achievement of a solution to the Middle East conflict, one that will bring lasting peace, security and stability to all countries in the region in line with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

Mr. Hallak (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The changes that have been taking place on the international scene since the early 1990s, despite their magnitude and their far-reaching implications, cannot change the principles and moral values that mankind has endeavoured to live by since the dawn of history. Right cannot become wrong overnight; equality cannot become hegemony; racism cannot become a virtue and the occupation of land of others cannot acquire legitimacy.

In the wake of those changes, and following the end of the cold war, the peoples of the world have come to attach great hope to the United Nations because the Organization, with its Charter and its lofty principles, represents in their eyes a strong guarantee of international peace and security and the means of putting an end to aggression and occupation.

Our region is the cradle of the three revealed religions. It is also the cradle of human civilization. Our roots run deep in our region. Syria is an important part of the Arab nation; it is an ancient land, proud of its history and proud of its civilization. By accepting in 1973 Security Council resolution 338 (1973), which rested on the foundation of Security Council resolution 242 (1967), Syria had opened the door to peace. Ever since, there have been efforts to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the region that would restore land and rights. There have been several initiatives in the interests of peace, some by individuals and some by States. All those initiatives have foundered, however, on the Israeli position which rejected peace on the basis of international legality and the resolutions of the United Nations.

Finally, there has been the United States peace initiative, which reaffirmed the principle of land for peace, on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). As specified in the guarantees and safeguards the United States presented to Syria, the United States stated that, in conformity with an earlier United States position that rejected the application of Israeli law to the Golan, it does not agree to the annexation by Israel of a single inch of territory in the Golan Heights which have been occupied since 1967.

It was on that basis that we participated in the Madrid conference. We contributed to the discussions that preceded the Madrid Conference and led to the convening of that Conference. Syria was the first to submit the first written paper, a document the United States has described as historic. It was Syria also that proposed the principle of land for peace, and the concept of total peace for total withdrawal. But Israel has exploited the negotiations for procrastination and for evading the requirements of peace, and has attempted to use the negotiations to impose its own conditions which have continued to be in conflict with the letter and the spirit of the relevant Security Council resolutions. We had expected Israel to understand that Syria's desire for peace does not mean that Syria would let go of a single inch of territory, or of an iota of its national sovereignty over that territory.

Four years have now passed since the convening of the Madrid Conference without just and comprehensive peace having been established in the Middle East. Recent developments have shown that Israel does not seek a true, just and comprehensive peace that would put an end to conflict, to occupation or to settlement — a peace that would guarantee security and stability for all.

Rather, the main focus of Israel is on trying to reach agreements that would detract from sovereignty and dignity, and would evade the principle of land for peace in pursuit of Israel's dream of hegemony and domination, agreements that would never guarantee the restoration of rights, especially with regard to the liberation of land and the exercise of self-determination.

All agreements that have been concluded throughout history on any other basis than balance, equality, equity and the respect of basic rights of all parties have never been anything but temporary truces. Those who would pursue the annals of history would find that this has been the sort of terrain wherein all unbalanced and unequal treaties find their burial ground and final resting place.

Economic peace cannot see the light of day in the absence of complete, comprehensive and just peace between the Arabs and Israel on all tracks. Any political or economic peace cannot engender stability or security unless the question of Al-Quds is definitely settled in a manner that would restore the Holy City to what it has always been: Arab; unless Israel withdraws from the Golan and the remaining occupied Arab territories to the lines of 4 June 1967, as well as from all the occupied Lebanese territories, and unless the refugees are enabled to return to their homeland, in line with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The essence of the conflict has never been, and will never be a problem that has to do with what types of cooperation should exist between Israel and the Arabs. Essentially, it is a conflict that has to do with occupation, aggression, expansion, the appropriation of land and the displacement of Arab civilians.

Syria has no conditions for the achievement of peace other than the implementation of the resolutions of international legality, putting an end to occupation, and the return of the Syrian Golan — which has been Syrian since the dawn of history — to its legitimate owners, those who have been displaced by Israel as a result of Israel's occupation, whose numbers today have reached half a million Syrians who have been forced to migrate and were displaced from the cities and villages of the Golan into the inner parts of Syria and who still await the opportunity to go back to their homes and to retrieve their property in order to be able to resume a natural life. The time has come for the refugees and the displaced persons to go back to their homes and to be compensated for the losses they have suffered.

The question of arms limitation in the Middle East will become more accessible and more effective if it is based on the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction, in particular, nuclear weapons, according to criteria which are not biased in favour of one State at the expense of all others. Disarmament must encompass all the countries in the region without exception, within the framework of the United Nations and under its supervision.

Syria has acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and has signed the safeguards agreement emanating from this Treaty. Syria has also signed the Convention on prohibition of biological weapons and has constantly supported the initiative seeking to make the Middle East a nuclear-weapon-free zone. During the Paris Conference of 1989 on biological weapons, Syria was the first to officially propose making the Middle East region a zone free of weapons of mass destruction — that is, nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. Meanwhile, Israel, whom everyone knows is the only State in the region that possesses the nuclear weapon — in addition to the fact that Israel also possesses other weapons of mass destruction — has refused to accede to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. It has also refused to place its nuclear installations and facilities to the safeguards regime during past decades and up till now, whereas the only logical choice for all peoples of the world, is to achieve security for all through complete nuclear disarmament and the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction.

To enable Israel to stockpile huge arsenals of sophisticated and destructive weapons cannot be the real guarantee for the security of Israel so long as Israel continues to occupy the lands of others by force, and so long as it continues to violate the rights of the Palestinian people. Those in Israel who believe that it is possible to achieve complete peace without Israel's total withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories are sadly mistaken, because such withdrawal, in conformity with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as well as Security Council 425 (1978) is a fundamental prerequisite for peace.

The road to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace is well-charted and well-understood. We are with the peace process, but we shall never engage in something that we do not believe in. Neither can we embark on anything which is contrary to our national interests and beliefs. If the conditions which provide comprehensive and just peace are there, then we shall support such peace, because we are resolved to wage the battle for peace to the very end. We cannot retract or renege as far as our position is concerned, but we cannot bargain away our rights on our land. Our rights and our claims are legitimate, and they are supported by international law and by the United Nations resolutions.

Our cause is just. It is supported by our Arab people and by the international community. We should like to reaffirm in this respect the concomitance of the Syrian and Lebanese tracks with regard to the achievement of peace — peace that would restore occupied lands and guarantee rights and preserve dignity on both tracks.

As we speak of the importance of accelerating negotiations or discussions on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks on the basis of the principles and the constants upon which the peace process was established, this leads us to reaffirm the fact that peace has been and will continue to be Syria's strategic option. The peace process cannot be built on a unilateral position. The other party has to be positive in dealing with all the given factors and all the elements and foundations of the serious and constructive positions proposed by Syria.

Syria cannot accept any symbol of occupation on its territory. Syria cannot accept anything less than full withdrawal from the Syrian Golan, and cannot accept anything less than equal security arrangements and parallel security arrangements, because the peace after which we aspire is peace that would guarantee the rights of every party and would be in the interest of all parties. It should be the sort of peace that would usher in, for the whole region, an era of stability and security. For us, full withdrawal from the Syrian Golan is the key to the peace process in its entirety.

We are optimistic as far as the future is concerned. Peace that does not come today will arrive tomorrow. That is the peace we strive for in order for our region to move from the state of war to a state of peace — peace that would give to each his rights; peace that would put an end to occupation and to the bloodshed of innocents while preserving the dignity of man; peace that would bring prosperity to the region and enable both Arabs and Israelis to live in security, stability and prosperity.

Finally, I should like to refer here to the draft resolution on the Syrian Golan under agenda item 44 on the situation in the Middle East. The draft resolution was adopted by the Arab Group and has been submitted as an Arab text. It is our hope that the draft resolution will gain the widest possible support.

Mr. Ateba (Cameroon) *(interpretation from French):* As we commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, we must emphasize that one of the longest-standing challenges facing the Organization is the situation that arose in the Middle East almost half a century ago. Since then, the international community has been constantly striving to establish just and lasting peace throughout that region.

After three wars and many skirmishes and other confrontations which had given rise to widespread tension, in turn compounded by the inflexibility of the various parties involved, no glimmer of hope seemed visible on the horizon. In this context, all the resolutions adopted on the matter by the United Nations, in particular Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), remained dead letters.

This is the Gordian knot that the international community, thanks to the goodwill of certain authorities in the countries of the region, has been working to untangle since the Madrid Conference in 1991.

Cameroon accordingly hails the tremendous vision and courage that the Israeli Government and the leaders of the Palestine Liberation Organization have displayed in their resolve to secure the peace that has been sought for so long.

The Cameroonian delegation would like once again to pay a tribute to the memory of the late, lamented Prime Minister of Israel, Yitzhak Rabin. This martyr for peace, whose passing was marked in Cameroon by a day of national mourning, made the peace process embarked on in the Middle East possible and credible.

Cameroon supports this process and welcomes the historic developments in that part of the world resulting from the signing of the Oslo and Washington agreements in 1993. The Washington agreement, which related to interim arrangements for Palestinian self-government made it possible to establish a Palestinian Authority in Gaza and Jericho and also to begin the process of the transfer of powers in the occupied territories. Cameroon has ties of friendship and cooperation with both the signatories and with the other countries of the region, and it urges the two parties to comply, as far as possible, with the timetable for implementation in order, among other things, to keep extremist acts on all sides to a minimum. In this respect, the signing on 28 September 1995 at Washington of the Interim Agreement on extending self-rule to the towns and territories of the West Bank, in implementation of the second phase of the application of the Declaration of Principles, confirms the resolve of the Israeli Government and the Palestinian National Authority to achieve their objective of peace.

Cameroon believes that in order to enable the embryo Palestinian entity to establish its authority on a firm basis, the international community must grant it support and assistance. For this reason, we support the work of the United Nations Special Coordinator in the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza. My country welcomes the fact that the momentum of the peace process embarked upon by Israel and Palestine is carrying over into other parts of the region. In this respect, the agreement concluded this year between the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and Israel encourages Cameroon in its conviction that comprehensive peace is achievable in the Middle East. It is hardly necessary to point out that just and lasting peace will be possible only if the legitimate interests of all the parties are taken into account.

Thus, Cameroon encourages the Israeli and Syrian Governments to begin negotiations as soon as possible to find a solution to the question of the Syrian Golan that is acceptable to everyone. Furthermore, the question of South Lebanon, too, can be solved only through direct negotiations between the Israeli and Lebanese authorities. My country calls on them to embark upon such negotiations with a view to concluding a peace agreement.

It goes without saying that the continuing tense situation in the Middle East makes it impossible for that region, the cradle of the monotheistic religions and of civilization, to derive full benefit from its rich potential. When peace is restored, it will once again become, we are sure, a showcase of the world's treasures.

The peoples of the Middle East, now strongly motivated by a resolve to achieve peace, must bury the hatchet of war once and for all and tackle the priority tasks of economic and social development.

Mr. Abu-Nimah (Jordan) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: The situation in the Middle East, with its core issue, the question of Palestine, continues to be an important item on the agenda of the international community as represented by this Organization. My delegation's participation in this debate stems from its firmly held belief in the vital role of the United Nations and in the need for the Organization to participate in the ongoing peace process. After all, the United Nations is the major bastion of international legality and the collective conscience of mankind. It was in the framework of the United Nations that the international community conceived and adopted most of the resolutions which contain the principles, elements and provisions that constitute the foundations of the settlement of the Middle East problem: the question of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict. The most telling proof of this fact is that

Security Council resolution 242 (1967) is the linchpin of the current peace process. It was that resolution 242 which opened the door towards peace back in 1967. Once the resolution is fully implemented in letter and in spirit on all tracks, and once the legitimate national and political rights of the Palestinian people have been attained, then we shall have succeeded, God willing, in establishing just, permanent and comprehensive peace in the region.

The situation in the Middle East, the question of Palestine and the question of peace in general are of primary concern to Jordan, whose track record since 1948 in those areas is well-known. Our policy in international relations is anchored in the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations. Therefore, we firmly believe in the principle of peaceful settlement of all international disputes, at all times and under all circumstances. Accordingly, as soon as the opportunity arose to address in earnest the conflict in the Middle East, my country moved expeditiously, as an active participant, to seize and ensure the success of the historic opportunity afforded by the Madrid Conference. That was indeed the first genuine turning-point in the history of that conflict. Our position on this has been characterized by the same positive spirit Jordan has demonstrated towards all the endeavours which aimed, throughout the long years of conflict, to arrive at a peaceful settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Jordan's concept of peace is that peace should be just, lasting and comprehensive. This is a concept that is in harmony with the outlook of all other parties to the conflict. Our commitment to peace, in the context of that concept, is both strategic and a matter of principle. It is based on our conviction that peace is, *inter alia*, an essential need for all the countries and peoples of the region. Once attained, peace would represent a major turning-point in the modern history of the region. It also would provide a solid basis for the prospects of stability and security for, and coexistence amongst, all countries of the region. Peace, in the final analysis, would give the peoples of the region the hope of leading a normal life, which has been denied them for some five decades.

Against this conceptual backdrop, my country concluded, on 26 October 1994, a Peace Treaty with Israel. The Treaty ensured the return of rights to their legitimate owners, rectified anomalies, turned a new leaf of good-neighbourliness between the two countries and established guidelines, in various spheres, for future relations and cooperation. The Jordan-Israel Treaty represents a significant step on the path towards the comprehensive peace sought by the negotiating partners and the international community as a whole — all the more so since our Treaty came as a follow-up to the peace accords reached with the Arab Republic of Egypt and the great progress achieved on the Palestinian-Israeli track.

Proceeding from this, we feel that all parties to the peace negotiations should persist in their efforts to reach a comprehensive peace. Meanwhile, efforts should be intensified, in a sincere and fair manner, with a view to consolidating the foundations of a viable peace. Clearly, these issues include the questions of refugees and displaced persons, Arab Al-Quds, settlements, sovereignty and the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. It is also clear that comprehensive peace requires progress, which means reaching agreement on both the Syrian-Israeli and Lebanese-Israeli tracks.

Without peace with Syria and Lebanon on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) and in accordance with the "land for peace" formula, adopted as a basis for peace between the parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict, then a comprehensive peace will remain elusive and the peace arrangements made so far will remain incomplete and inadequate. It is also clear that the only guarantee of curbing the whirlpool of violence which targets the cause of peace in the region, that violence whose grave dangers we are aware of and which we condemn and reject, is to achieve further progress in the peace process.

The question of Al-Quds remains the key to a just peace. Thus a fair and balanced solution to this issue is bound to be extremely helpful. Any accord on Al-Quds should not ignore the fact that there is an overall international consensus, at virtually all legal and political levels, that East Al-Quds is part and parcel of the West Bank, which was occupied in 1967. Therefore, it is subject to the terms and conditions of the Fourth Geneva Convention and to the relevant Security Council resolutions. In point of fact, the Security Council itself accorded a special status to Al-Quds since its occupation by Israel. Resolution 252 (1968) is quite unequivocal in that respect, as it rejects all Israeli measures and legislation aimed at changing the status, the demographic composition or the topographical features of the city. Security Council resolution 476 (1980) expressly called for ending the Israeli occupation of the Arab territories occupied in 1967, including the city of Al-Quds. Resolution 478 (1980), which calls on States not to move their diplomatic missions to the Holy City, is perhaps the most significant example of international insistence on rejecting Israel's annexation of Al-Quds. Therefore, that annexation was, and still is, contrary to the basic principles of international law, since Arab Al-Quds is an occupied territory subject to the rules of international law, including Security Council resolutions and the Geneva Conventions.

We realize that the Palestinian-Israeli accords deferred consideration of the status of Al-Quds to the final stage of negotiations, in view of the special importance, complexity and difficulty of this issue. It is hoped also that this delay would set aside a thorny matter in the interest of ensuring the strong and smooth start-up of the peace process, which would lay the groundwork for confidence-building between the two sides and reinforce their conviction that peace could be achieved. All that, it was assumed, would be conducive to an even-handed and satisfactory resolution of the issue in due course. Therefore, any measure taken by Israel since Madrid to change or amend the legal, political or demographic structure of Al-Quds would be tantamount to creating new realities on the ground, and would represent a *fait accompli* that would be imposed on the Arab side at the final phase of negotiations.

In the same vein, needless to say, similar actions, such as the recent decision by the American Congress to move the United States Embassy to Al-Quds, would have a serious and negative impact on the negotiations. In fact, this would constitute an a priori ruling on the status of the Holy City well before the start of negotiations on its final status. Such a development is certainly harmful to the peace process as a whole. It does not serve the long-term interests of the peoples of the region or their aspirations after a common future built on stability, cooperation, respect and understanding. Therefore, we condemn that decision and stress that it is null and void, as it runs counter to the relevant United Nations resolutions and to the official American positions. Furthermore, that decision endangers the peace process as a whole and might, indeed, bring about its collapse. Accordingly, we call upon the American administration to adhere to its declared position, which is contrary to Congress's decision on this matter.

I take this opportunity to inform you, Sir, that my country is aware that deferring discussion on Al-Quds requires the maintenance of the status quo pending the forthcoming final stage of the negotiations. Thus, in the interest of preserving the religious, cultural and historical character of the Holy City, the Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has unfailingly looked after the holy sites by providing maintenance and conservation work. My Government has also provided support to the keepers of those shrines, with a view to ensuring their safety and protection in the face of any potential threat pending a final resolution of the issue.

It is in the same spirit and within the same context that we should be addressing the two other questions of refugees and settlements. Here again, the deferment of the discussion of those questions was due to their overall weight and significance and to the need to ensure a forceful and pace-setting beginning to the peace process in its initial stages. A satisfactory settlement of these questions on the basis of United Nations resolutions and the principles of international law is a *sine qua non* for building a just, comprehensive and viable peace that would be embraced by current and future generations in the whole region. In this regard, may I recall what His Majesty King Hussein said before the United States Congress in July 1994:

(spoke in English)

> "It should never be forgotten that peace resides ultimately not in the hands of Governments, but in the hands of the people. For unless peace can be made real to the men, women and children of the Middle East, the best efforts of negotiators will come to nought".

(spoke in Arabic)

From our point of view, we believe that the international community has a substantial responsibility to fulfil towards the promotion and success of the peace process. True, peace must be entrenched and defended by peoples. But peace transcends abstract concepts; it also means tangible dividends. That is why my country is seeking a larger and deeper international understanding of the economic, developmental and financial needs of our peoples, with a view to consolidating peace throughout the region. And herein lies the significance of the recent economic summits held in Casablanca and of late in Amman with a view to draw up and refine a regional economic development blueprint. The results of the Amman Economic Summit were very promising indeed. We trust that the next economic summit, which will be hosted by Egypt, would build on the achievements made so far. Moral and verbal support of the peace process are not adequate for shielding peace and moving the process forward. That is why we believe that the United Nations, the representative of international legality, has a vital role to play through expansion of its programmes and operational activities in the countries of the region.

Proceeding from all this, my delegation hopes that the draft resolution regarding the Middle East settlement, as well as the two draft resolutions related to Al-Quds and the Syrian Golan will be adopted without a vote.

Mr. Poernomo (Indonesia): Earlier this week the General Assembly had the opportunity to consider the agenda item entitled "Question of Palestine". On that occasion, Member States that participated in the debate reaffirmed that this question constitutes the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, with profound ramifications on the Middle East landscape as a whole, which we are considering today. The debate further made clear that progress achieved through the Palestinian-Israeli track could not by itself constitute a panacea for other problems afflicting the region, for, over the decades, there has emerged an intricate web of interrelated issues involving other States in the region which needs to be untangled if a just, lasting and a comprehensive peace is to be achieved.

Fortunately, however, the road map and the major aspects of a definitive peace settlement have already been traced out in various resolutions adopted by the United Nations. These call, *inter alia*, for Israeli withdrawal from all occupied territories, including Jerusalem, respect for the right of all States in the region to peacefully coexist within secure and internationally recognized boundaries, and recognition of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and statehood, and exercise of those rights by them.

It is undeniable that at this critical stage in the ongoing peace endeavours we need yet another series of breakthroughs on other aspects of the Middle East question which have for so long frustrated and indeed paralysed the peace process. It has been our hope that the positive spillover effect of the historic Declaration of Principles of 1993, as evident in the progress subsequently achieved in the Israeli-Jordanian track of negotiations, will be replicated in the other dimensions of the Arab-Israeli dispute. The progress achieved in the Palestinian-Israeli and Jordanian-Israeli tracks has shown that barriers to obstacles can be overcome and commitment to peace can be achieved through dialogue and negotiations rather than through resorting to violence and war, with their attendant consequences.

Given the central role of the Palestinian question in the Middle East equation, it is not surprising that the milestone achieved in the Palestinian-Israeli track has had its inevitable reverberations throughout the region. The recent Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip has paved the way towards the realization of the cherished aspirations of the Palestinian people by, among others, widening the areas of Palestinian self-government, laying down modalities for the holding of elections to the Palestinian legislative body, and allowing for negotiations on the final status of Jerusalem. Of no less importance are provisions relating to the withdrawal of Israeli forces, legal issues, allocation of water resources, religious sites, human rights, economy, environment, and science and technology.

It is gratifying to note that the transformation in relations between the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel has been extended to those between Israel and Jordan, which culminated in the treaty of peace between them. This momentous agreement terminated the state of war and paved the way towards the establishment of diplomatic relations between them. We note that during the past year relations between them have been further consolidated, to the mutual benefit of their peoples.

However, the hope generated by these historic developments that progress can be also achieved in the Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Lebanese negotiations, leading to a comprehensive and just peace based on the framework of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) have not yet materialized. My delegation notes with concern that despite laudable efforts by the Government of Syria progress towards ending the Israeli occupation of the Golan Heights has been stagnant. It is also particularly regrettable that Israel persists in carrying out periodic raids against Lebanon, which have caused immense suffering to its defenceless civilians. The international community has repeatedly condemned such acts as a flagrant violation of Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity which cannot but have a detrimental impact on the cause of peace in the region.

Ever since the outbreak of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the United Nations has been seized of this question and has historically taken a principled position aimed at bringing about genuine peace in the region. At this critical juncture, my delegation deems it essential for the Organization not only to maintain but also to increase its role, both politically and economically, in the peace process. Its potential for contributing to these endeavours and for resolving the key issues involved must be fully harnessed. Given the enormous number of tasks, the role of the Organization remains crucial in resolving the Middle East conflict.

Indonesia looks forward to the day when Arab-Israeli relations will no longer claim the attention of the international community because of their potential threat to global peace and security, but, rather, because of their contribution to the betterment of the region as a whole and the well-being of its people. We should therefore seize the unprecedented opportunity now before us and marshal our collective commitment to bringing the ongoing endeavours to the point of irreversibility in history. The hopes and interests of the people of the Middle East and, indeed, of all the world, call for the achievement of true peace, common security and generalized prosperity.

Mr. Allagany (Saudi Arabia) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The General Assembly discusses today the question of the Middle East which is currently witnessing the beginnings of a new era in the contemporary history of a region that has seen many wars and conflicts. International cooperation has resulted in moving forward the Middle East peace process which was launched at the Peace Conference on the Middle East in Madrid. Although the process has not yet reached its final goal, the opportunity is still there to give it momentum, especially on the Lebanese and the Syrian tracks. Four years have now passed since the convening of the Peace Conference in Madrid. The Conference sought a just and lasting peace in the region, based on the principle of land for peace and the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), resolution 252 (1968) on Holy Jerusalem, and resolution 425 (1978) on southern Lebanon. The principle and formula of "land for peace" still await definition of what is meant by "land", and the principle of "withdrawal" is still being obfuscated by the term "redeployment" and by Israel's demands for ending the boycott without guarantees for the return of all the occupied territories, in addition to other demands that would focus the multilateral negotiations on supplementary issues, while the main issues remain suspended and frozen.

My country still follows up the developments of the peace process in the Middle East, both on the bilateral and the multilateral levels with very keen interest. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has continued to stand by this process since its initiation in 1991 in Madrid. Such stand reflects the sincerity of Arab orientations and intentions in the pursuit of a just and comprehensive peace in the region. We have repeatedly stressed that multilateral negotiations constitute a part of the peace process which started in Madrid, and is not a substitute for it.

Al-Quds Al-Sharif, the first of the two Qiblas, and the third of the holy shrines, will always remain at the centre of attention by the Arab and the Muslim worlds. The manner in which this question is handled will determine the future of the peace process in its entirety. The current tendency in the negotiations to defer the discussion of the question of Al-Quds to the final stage of the peace negotiations creates some sort of duplication between, on the one hand, the imposition of a *fait accompli* and, on the other, the attempt to afford the peace process the opportunity of creating a climate of confidence. We say this because we witness the persistence of Israeli authorities in taking a series of measures with the aim of introducing demographic and institutional changes designed to change the status of Al-Quds and, thereby, to influence in advance the negotiations which are to be held later with the aim of determining the final status of the Holy City.

We cannot believe or imagine that the peace process would be able to continue to progress automatically. Rather, we believe that all parties concerned are required to give greater momentum and more drive to the negotiations in view of the fact that the extensive support the peace process has attracted so far has been linked in people's minds with increasing expectations regarding the full return of lands and restoration of rights, side by side with the initiation of regional cooperation in the areas of arms limitation and the development of the economies of the region's countries. Effective progress on the Lebanese and Syrian tracks must guarantee the return of Syria's full sovereignty over the Golan Heights and guarantee also full implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) on withdrawal from the occupied Lebanese South.

My Government believes that it is necessary to renounce the concepts of hegemony and military superiority as well as the concept of occupying territories as a means of achieving security. We reaffirm that comprehensive peace is the effective and real guarantee of the security of all parties. The possession of nuclear weapons by one of the countries of the Middle East is, in itself, a spectre that threatens the stability and the security of the whole region and increases the possibility of the proliferation of those weapons to other countries in the region. Therefore, engagement by Israel in serious negotiations on nuclear disarmament and acceptance by Israel to place its nuclear installations under international guarantees, in addition to its accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) are extremely vital requirements. It is our hope that Israel is going to speed up the adoption of practical and tangible steps to build confidence in this respect.

The United Nations has done much to promote peace since the establishment of the Organization at a very critical juncture of history. Therefore, the United Nations has sought to spare man the scourge of war and has opened the road before the national liberation forces in the world. The future of the United Nations today depends, more than at any other time, on its ability to influence events in the world. It depends on how much the United Nations can affect the creation of the facts of tomorrow in an age where changes and developments overtake one another.

Having said this, we hope that we shall be able soon to look upon the United Nations documents on the Middle East conflict as reference works for the study of history. Until this happens, the United Nations will continue to bear a moral, legal and political responsibility to find a just and comprehensive settlement to the Middle East conflict. Such a settlement will create a new reality that would usher in a new era of stability, prosperity and fruitful cooperation for all the countries of the region.

Mr. Çelem (Turkey): Last year and the year before, my predecessors began their statements on this same agenda item with a tribute to the two architects of the Middle East peace process: President Arafat and Prime Minister Rabin. This year, I was prepared to follow suit and to do so joyfully. However, the grievous loss of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin obliges me to be restrained. We hope and believe that his legacy will help nurture the peace process.

Still, recognizing that the enemies of peace in the Middle East do not hesitate to engage in violence to hamper the transition to a new and peaceful order, we believe that all acts aiming at undermining the peace process, particularly acts of terrorism and violence, should be combated. We believe that terrorism is a scourge of our age and calls for a collective response. No country in the Middle East or other parts of the world can remain indifferent to this threat to peace, security and stability. Unwavering international cooperation is essential for the success of our efforts in this field.

After the shocking loss of Prime Minister Rabin, some hoped, and maybe still hope, that the peace efforts in the Middle East would stumble. Today, we should all stand firm here and say: "Your hopes are in vain". For peace lovers, there is no time for anguish, there is no time for idleness. In this respect, we welcome the decisiveness of the Government of Israel, demonstrated by the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Jenin. In addition to this, the procedure for the transfer of responsibilities in Tulkarm has already begun. We hope that the withdrawal will continue as scheduled, and there is every indication that it will.

An issue of concern for us remains the economic and social fragility of the peace process. In order to avoid possible negative social repercussions, the success achieved so far should quickly be translated into better living conditions for the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza. The tangible support of the international community for the peace process should be shown in expedited economic, financial and technical assistance to the Palestinian people. Turkey, on its own behalf, donated $2 million in 1994 to the Palestinian Authority. We have also pledged a soft loan worth $50 million to the Palestinian Authority through the Turkish Eximbank. We are also cooperating with the Palestinian Authority in training Palestinian officials and students.

Here, we would like to point out the significance of the Middle East Development Bank, which was established during the recent Amman Summit. We believe that this regional development bank will constitute one of the major cornerstones of stable development in our region.

With a direct interest in the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, Turkey has always supported the just cause of the Palestinians. We are ready to back all initiatives in the quest for a settlement based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) on this issue.

We have been actively taking part in the peace process from the very beginning, including in all five multilateral working groups, and will continue to do so. As a part of this effort, Turkey hosted the seventh meeting of the Middle East Multilateral Working Group on Refugees, from 12 to 15 December 1994, in Antalya.

I believe that now is the right time for the international community to expect positive developments in the remaining two tracks — the Syrian and Lebanese — of the Arab-Israeli negotiations. This is essential for further progress and to keep up the momentum. This, of course, requires the political will of the parties. In this context, we regard the continuing efforts of third parties as praiseworthy and hope that they will lead to an eventual breakthrough.

Seizing this opportunity, I should also like to reiterate my Government's stand on the situation in

Lebanon. We attach great importance to the maintenance of the territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty of that country. We stress the significance of the full and strict implementation of the Taif Agreement by all parties concerned, and we once again stress the need for implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

A lasting solution to the Middle East conflict can be based only upon the right of all States in the region, including Israel, to exist in peace behind internationally recognized and secure borders. The peace we are talking about is one that the peoples of the region have been yearning for since the end of the First World War. This is why it is so dear. This is why we hasten to reap its benefits. This is why, once again, we are urging all the parties to do their utmost for its attainment.

Agenda item 122

Financing of the United Nations peace-keeping forces in the Middle East

(a) United Nations Disengagement Observer Force

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/50/792)

The Acting President: If there is no proposal under rule 66 of the rules of procedure, I shall take it that the General Assembly decides not to discuss the report of the Fifth Committee that is before the Assembly today.

It was so decided.

The Acting President: Statements will therefore be limited to explanations of vote.

The positions of delegations regarding the recommendation of the Fifth Committee have been made clear in the Committee and are reflected in the relevant official record.

May I remind members that, under paragraph 7 of decision 34/401, the General Assembly agreed that

> "When the same draft resolution is considered in a Main Committee and in plenary meeting, a delegation should, as far as possible, explain its vote only once, i.e., either in the Committee or in plenary meeting unless that delegation's vote in plenary meeting is different from its vote in the Committee."

May I further remind delegations that, also in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Before we begin to take action on the recommendation contained in the report of the Fifth Committee, I should like to advise representatives that we shall proceed to take a decision in the same manner as in the Fifth Committee.

The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report (A/50/792).

The draft resolution was adopted by the Fifth Committee without a vote. May I consider that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 50/20).

The Acting President: I now call on the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, who wishes to make a statement in explanation of position on the draft resolution just adopted.

Mr. Sulaiman (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I should like to explain the position of my delegation in respect of the draft resolution A/50/L.50 relating to the financing of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force.

We wish to put on record that had this draft resolution been put to the vote, we would have voted against it, in keeping with the constant and principle position of the Syrian Arab Republic which we expressed at previous sessions of the General Assembly. Our position is that the funding of the Force should be borne by Israel as it was Israel's aggressive practices that gave rise to the existence of this Force.

The Acting President: We have thus concluded the present stage of our consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 122.

Programme of work

The Acting President: I should like to make an announcement concerning the General Assembly's programme of work.

This afternoon, as the first item, the Assembly will take action on the recommendations which the General Committee adopted at its 5th and 6th meetings, held on 28 and 30 November 1995 respectively, and which are contained in its fourth report (A/50/250/Add.3).

On Monday, 4 December, in the morning, the Assembly will first take up sub-item (f) of agenda item 17 for the appointment of the two remaining members of the Committee on Conferences, and then agenda item 24 — Implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.

United Nations A/50/PV.77

General Assembly
Fiftieth Session

77th plenary meeting
Friday, 1 December 1995, 3 p.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Diogo Freitas do Amaral . . . . (Portugal)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work: reports of the General Committee

Fourth report of the General committee (A/50/250/Add.3)

The President: The fourth report of the General Committee (A/50/250/Add.3) concerns a request by the delegation of Spain for the inclusion in the agenda of an additional item, "Admission of the World Tourism Organization to membership in the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund"; a request by the Secretary-General for the inclusion of an additional sub-item under agenda item 15, "Elections to fill vacancies in principal organs"; and the allocation of agenda item 164, "Normalization of the situation concerning South Africa".

In paragraph 1 of its report, the General Committee decided to recommend to the General Assembly that the item entitled "Admission of the World Tourism Organization to membership in the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund" should be included in the agenda of the current session. May I take it that the General Assembly decides to include this additional item in the agenda of the current session?

It was so decided.

The President: The General Committee further decided to recommend to the General Assembly that this additional item should be allocated to the Fifth Committee. May I take it that the General Assembly decides to allocate the additional item to the Fifth Committee?

It was so decided.

The President: The Chairman of the Fifth Committee will be informed of the decision just taken.

In paragraph 2 of the report, the General Committee decided to recommend to the General Assembly that an additional sub-item, entitled "Election of a member of the International Court of Justice", should be included as a sub-item of agenda item 15, "Elections to fill vacancies in principal organs". May I take it that the General Assembly decides to include this additional sub-item in the agenda of the current session?

It was so decided.

The President: The General Committee further decided to recommend to the General Assembly that this additional sub-item should be considered directly in plenary meeting. May I take it that the General Assembly decides to consider this sub-item directly in plenary meeting?

It was so decided.

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

The President: In paragraph 4 of its report, the General Committee decided to recommend to the General Assembly that, given its political importance, agenda item 164 should be considered directly in plenary meeting, on the understanding that, owing to the financial complexity of the matter, the Fifth Committee would be invited to provide technical observations regarding the implementation of any draft resolutions to be submitted for action by the General Assembly in plenary meeting. The General Committee also decided to recommend to the General Assembly that the Fifth Committee should be asked to submit its technical observations by 12 December 1995.

May I take it that the General Assembly adopts these recommendations?

It was so decided.

The President: The Chairman of the Fifth Committee will be informed of the decision just taken.

Agenda item 44 (*continued*)

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General (A/50/574)

Draft resolutions (A/50/L.24, A/50/L.37, A/50/L.38)

The President: I call on the representative of Egypt to introduce draft resolution A/50/L.38.

Mr. Abderahman (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): It is my pleasure, while we consider agenda item 44, "The situation in the Middle East", to introduce draft resolution A/50/L.38, entitled "The Syrian Golan", on behalf of its sponsors: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Kuwait, Malaysia, Qatar, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen and my own country, Egypt. I have the further pleasure of announcing that the following States have joined in sponsoring the draft resolution: Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Sudan.

The draft resolution acquires special importance in the light of the developments that have been unfolding in the Middle East and of the peace process in that region. The draft resolution recalls one of the main points of reference adopted by the Security Council regarding the occupied Syrian Golan, namely Security Council resolution 497 (1981) of 17 December 1981. The draft resolution reaffirms the fundamental principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force, and reaffirms once more the applicability of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, to the occupied Syrian Golan.

The draft resolution notes with satisfaction the convening at Madrid of the Peace Conference on the Middle East on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), with the hope that substantial and concrete progress will be achieved on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks for the realization of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region. The draft resolution also expresses deep concern over the fact that Israel has not withdrawn from the Syrian Golan, contrary to the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

By adopting draft resolution A/50/L.38, the General Assembly would reaffirm its determination which was stated in previous resolutions, that the Hague Convention of 1907 and the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War continue to apply to the Syrian territory under occupation, and would determine once again that Israel's continued occupation of the Syrian Golan Heights and its de facto annexation constitute a stumbling-block in the way of achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region.

On behalf of the sponsors, we hope that adoption by the General Assembly of the draft resolution A/50/L.38, which we hope will be for the last time, will result in bringing about complete Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan, as called for in Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

Mr. Pibulsonggram (Thailand): In speaking on the situation in the Middle East, allow me first, on behalf of the Government and the people of Thailand, to express our condolences to the Government and the people of Israel for the untimely loss of the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. To us, he was much more than just a leader of a nation. He was a man of great courage, in war and in peace. He fought brilliantly and resolutely for peace. His enduring vision for peace in the Middle East will undoubtedly live on as his most commendable legacy for generations to come.

In this regard, the Thai delegation wishes to commend the unwavering efforts of the Palestinians, under the wise and resolute leadership of Mr. Yasser

Arafat, in his pursuit of peace amidst turbulent surroundings and, at times, against all odds. It is my delegation's fervent hope that Mr. Rabin's martyrdom will inspire all sides in the Middle East conflict to redouble their efforts to achieve the peace of which Mr. Rabin, Mr. Peres and Mr. Arafat have been the chief architects.

We have witnessed a number of positive developments since the signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in September 1993. The Palestinians, who have fairly established self-rule in the Gaza Strip and Jericho, are now in control of their own affairs, be they in education, health care, tax collection, social services or tourism. Moreover, we witnessed historic progress in the signing last September of the Interim Agreement extending Palestinian administrative authority over the West Bank, which ushered the peace process into its second and vitally important stage. Thailand welcomes the signing of this Agreement, for it manifests the constructive development of the peace process. We commend all parties involved for their untiring efforts in achieving this noble goal.

Admittedly, the situation in the Gaza Strip under Palestinian self-rule is still fragile. The international community should not let the Palestinians struggle alone. The international community must work together with the Palestinian Authority to ensure that the support and promotion of economic and social development in the occupied territories are sustained. This is the only way to bring about tangible improvements in the living conditions of the Palestinians. Indeed, it serves as a basis for fulfilling a long journey towards successful self-rule.

With regard to Israel and Jordan, I am happy to note that the peace process has taken a rather ambitious form. One year after the signing of the Jordanian-Israeli Treaty of Peace, the international community has witnessed the normalization of diplomatic ties between the two countries. Having committed themselves to embracing the spirit of cooperation, Israel and Jordan are already exploring ways and means to enhance the prospects for regional development. The Middle East/North Africa Economic Summit recently held in Amman stands as evidence of that. My delegation strongly believes that with durable peace as a foundation the Middle East will realize its full potential as a dynamic region of economic prosperity.

As for relations between Israel and Syria, it goes without saying that reconciliation between the two countries is of paramount importance for the peace process. In our view, the negotiation between the two Governments that took place in May this year truly attested to their good will in striving towards a just, lasting and comprehensive peace. Dialogues between these two countries are necessary, we believe, in order to sustain a favourable political climate and safeguard the gains that have already been achieved.

While we acknowledge these encouraging developments, we must realize that the peace process still faces some obstacles. The differences of views on reconciliation among various parties to Middle East conflicts have often led to acts of violence. But resort to violence is not the way to solve the problems. We believe that durable peace can be achieved only when all sides work together to settle their differences through diplomatic and peaceful means. In order for the peace process to continue to gain momentum, mutual accommodation and unwavering commitment from all parties concerned will be crucial.

It seems a paradox that, while the political process is moving towards a successful *rapprochement*, the problem of refugees and immigrants increases because of the repatriation of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees to their motherland. Therefore, we, the Members of the United Nations, must continue our support and provide increased resources to help the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East meet its increased responsibility at this crucial time of trial. Without assistance, the plight of the refugees will be too enormous for any one organization or any one country to handle.

The continued progress of the Middle East peace process has been a matter of great interest and concern to the countries of Southeast Asia and has always been high on the agenda of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Foreign Ministers. At their meeting in Bandar Seri Begawan last July, they issued a joint communiqué which stated, *inter alia*, the following:

> "The Foreign Ministers welcomed the progress made in the Middle East peace process, in particular the implementation of the PLO-Israeli Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements of 1993. The Ministers stressed the importance of continuing the discussions between the Palestinians and Israelis to reach an agreement on the details of the withdrawal of Israeli soldiers from the West Bank. They also welcomed the peace

> treaty between Jordan and Israel and believed that these would contribute to a comprehensive settlement to the Middle East problem."

Thailand will continue to follow the situation in the Middle East with great interest and concern. Indeed, we wish to reaffirm our support for a just, durable and comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian issue and the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as well as other relevant United Nations resolutions. It is my delegation's hope that the global community will maintain its efforts and its support in nurturing the peace process until the attainment of a lasting peace in this region becomes a reality.

Mr. Huaraka (Namibia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Mr. Maruyama (Japan): The current Middle East peace process, which was launched with the Madrid Conference in October 1991, has continued to make significant progress throughout the year. Indeed, there are encouraging signs that the Middle East, a region fraught for so long with disputes and confrontations, is entering a new era in which its constituent countries are beginning to recognize their mutual dependence and to forge relations of trust. The most noteworthy progress made recently, of course, is the agreement reached in September between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) on the expansion of the Palestinian interim self-government Authority. Under the terms of that agreement, Israeli forces in the West Bank are being redeployed, and the election of a Palestinian Council is scheduled to take place perhaps as early as the beginning of next year. Japan heartily welcomes this Agreement and pays high tribute to the parties concerned for their tireless efforts in reaching it. It is our earnest hope that over the course of time the Palestinian interim self-government Authority will prove a viable and effective institution.

Our attention now turns to Israel's talks with Syria and with Lebanon. We look forward to progress in those bilateral talks in the hope that peace will be achieved throughout the Middle East in the not-too-distant future.

Amid the generally promising regional developments, the world was shocked and saddened in November by the tragic assassination of Israel's Prime Minister, Mr. Yitzhak Rabin. Japan hopes that the talks between the PLO and Israel will continue to move forward, and that the parties concerned will not yield to violence. That they have declared their determination to overcome this tragedy and to continue their efforts towards the realization of peace is, in my view, confirmation that the peace process is in fact irreversible. Indeed, it is clear that both sides have progressed too far along the path to conciliation and that the commitment to peace among their peoples is too strong to allow the quest for a peaceful solution of the Palestine question to be thwarted by such acts of terrorism.

The year 1995 has also been noteworthy in terms of Japan's Middle East diplomacy. This past September Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama visited Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria, Israel, the Gaza Strip and Jordan and held frank discussions with the leaders in the region on the promotion of peace and on strengthening ties with Japan. The assurance he gave them that Japan would continue to contribute to the advancement of the Middle East peace process and pursue its diplomatic efforts for peace and stability in the Gulf region was acknowledged with gratitude.

Also in September, Minister for Foreign Affairs Yohei Kono represented the Government of Japan at the signing of the Agreement on the expansion of the Palestinian interim self-government Authority and attended a ministerial meeting of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for assistance to the Palestinians, where he affirmed Japan's continued support for its goals. Recognizing the importance of a peace dividend, as I mentioned in my statement earlier this week, in September 1993 Japan pledged $200 million in assistance to the Palestinians, and to date it has disbursed $150 million of that amount. Japan will continue to extend the same positive assistance it has provided in the past, extending a portion of its assistance directly to the Palestinian people. Japan also intends to provide both goods and personnel required to hold the elections for the Palestinian Council.

In addition to advancing the peace process through bilateral political dialogue, it is also necessary to create relations of mutual trust through multilateral talks on issues of common concern to the people of the region. To develop a basis for such cooperation, it is important that people in the region share a common code of conduct and common objectives. This is particularly true in the field of environmental protection and conservation. Thus, at the meeting of the Multilateral Negotiations Environmental Working Group last year, Japan proposed that a set of guidelines be established in this area. This proposal was brought to fruition in October 1994 with the adoption of the Bahrain Environmental Code of Conduct.

Tourism is another promising area for regional cooperation, and Japan participated in efforts on this issue in the context of the Tourism Workshop of the Regional Economic Development Working Group. Those efforts led to an agreement on the establishment of the Middle East-Mediterranean Travel and Tourism Association on the occasion of the second conference of the Middle East/North Africa Economic Summit held in Amman, Jordan, this past October.

The peace and security of the Gulf region continue to be of concern to Japan. In this connection I feel obliged to say a word about Iraq, a country that has tremendous influence on the peace and stability of the region.

Japan remains firm in its insistence that the Government of Iraq heed the will of the international community and fully comply with all the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. At the same time, Japan is deeply concerned about the plight of the Iraqi people, who are experiencing severe medical and nutritional problems. Therefore, out of humanitarian concern, Japan supports Security Council resolution 986 (1995), which would allow the Government of Iraq to export limited quantities of oil in order to purchase necessary goods for its people. Japan calls upon Iraq to comply promptly with this and the other relevant resolutions.

Once a comprehensive, just and lasting peace is achieved in the Middle East and the people of the region are able to enjoy stability and prosperity, the entire international community will be better off. Japan thus believes that it has a role to play in efforts to establish a new framework of international relations in the region.

Let me conclude my statement today by expressing Japan's determination to redouble its efforts on behalf of international peace and security on the basis of its close partnership with the countries of the Middle East.

Mr. Moubarak (Lebanon) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Lebanon is the country that has suffered most as a result of the Israeli-Arab conflict. We feel that we have a great deal to gain from the achievement of the just, comprehensive and lasting peace we are striving to establish in the region on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978).

My delegation wishes to reaffirm Lebanon's sincere commitment to the peace process which was launched in Madrid in 1991. At the time, we accepted the initiative of the two co-sponsors of the peace process, the United States and the then Soviet Union, on the basis of Security Council resolution 425 (1978). However, for 17 years now, Israel has continued to refuse to implement that resolution and has continued instead to occupy parts of southern Lebanon and to launch attacks, on a daily basis, against innocent civilian populations while Lebanon has continued persistently to call for the implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which reaffirms the sovereignty of Lebanon and its territorial integrity within internationally recognized borders.

Israel should also withdraw completely from the occupied Golan Heights, to the lines of 4 June 1967, in keeping with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Indeed, peace cannot be achieved in the region without Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon and the Golan. Israel's occupation of southern Lebanon since 1978 has brought nothing but tragedy and devastation to my country. Neither the 1978 invasion, known as the "Litani operation", nor the 1982 invasion provided Israel with the security it sought. On the contrary, the occupation created more complications and caused great suffering.

The violence in southern Lebanon reaffirms anew the complete failure of the concept of the security zone established by Israel. Israel's almost daily attacks to the north of that area underscore the failure of that concept. Over the past two weeks, Israel has fired more than 8,000 artillery shells on southern Lebanon. Therefore, we reaffirm the absolute necessity of implementing resolution 425 (1978) as such implementation is the only means of bringing stability and peace to southern Lebanon.

In this context, the Security Council, in our view, is the supreme international organ entrusted with protecting States from aggression and with following up the implementation of its resolutions. We believe also that Council meetings should be held whenever necessary in order to consider Israeli aggression against southern Lebanon, as this cannot but support the peace process in the Middle East.

As for the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), it has a focal and vital role in the implementation of resolution 425 (1978). Accordingly, we once again call for maintaining the size and effectiveness of the UNIFIL presence in view of the important role that awaits in that respect. We also take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the officers and personnel of UNIFIL for the sacrifices they have made since 1978. Our deep recognition goes also to the UNIFIL troop-contributing countries.

I wish also to reiterate Lebanon's commitment to the realization of the legitimate national aspirations of the Palestinian people and to the enablement of that people to exercise its right to self-determination. We call for the complete implementation of General Assembly resolution 194 (III) and of the resolutions that clearly and unequivocally affirm the right of the Palestinians to return to their homes. Lebanon categorically refuses any attempt to settle any of the Palestinians residing in Lebanon on its lands. That consistent position has been enshrined in Lebanon's constitution, in consonance with the Taif Agreement of 1989, and is the subject of a national consensus among all Lebanese.

The Commission on Human Rights, which has adopted several resolutions concerning human rights issues in southern Lebanon, has reaffirmed clearly that Israel, by its practices, violated the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Geneva Convention of 1949 relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, and The Hague Agreement of 1907. Lebanese detainees are still living in Israeli camps in southern Lebanon, in particular the Al-Khiam camp, under arbitrary detention. We call for their immediate release.

As regards Al-Quds, we reaffirm that Israel's decision to apply its law and its administration to the city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif is illegal, and is, therefore, null and void as it has no basis in legitimacy. Likewise, we condemn the decision by certain States to move their diplomatic missions to Al-Quds, in violation of Security Council resolution 478 (1980), and deplore their refusal to comply with the provisions of that resolution. Accordingly, we call upon those States to respect the relevant United Nations resolutions, in consonance with the Charter of the Organization.

As regards the decision of the United States Congress to transfer the United States embassy to Al-Quds, we once again reaffirm our condemnation of that decision, which we consider to be null and void, since it contradicts United Nations resolutions as well as official United States positions. This decision threatens to bring about the collapse of the peace process in its entirety. We call upon the United States administration to maintain its declared position in regard to that decision.

As for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, we believe it has no effect on the Middle East region so long as Israel refuses to accede to the Treaty and continues to threaten the region with its nuclear arsenals, in defiance of international law and of the resolutions of the United Nations and its specialized agencies.

With respect to draft resolution A/50/L.24 concerning the Middle East peace process, we reaffirm our consistent position, namely, that we would wish to see this draft resolution sponsored unanimously in order to express the international community's unconditional support for the peace process in the Middle East. Unfortunately, however, the draft resolution has neglected to mention Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which is one of the essential foundations of the peace process begun in Madrid and thus neglected one of the essential mechanisms of the peace process. Consequently, the Lebanese delegation, in keeping with its unchanged position that has been declared in the context of the Middle East peace process, will vote against this draft resolution. We feel certain that the international community will consider carefully the deeper meaning of this vote by Lebanon, in particular since Lebanon is a principal partner in the peace negotiations.

In addition, my delegation wishes to reaffirm, in relation to preambular paragraphs 3, 4 and 7, and operative paragraphs 5 and 8 of the draft resolution concerning multilateral negotiations, that it is important that such multilateral negotiations not take place before the bilateral negotiations have led to a fair and comprehensive agreement between all the participants in the peace process. We are completely convinced that the multilateral talks held thus far have been premature and that, therefore, they will not bear fruit since the bilateral tracks have not yielded results that are in consonance with international law. This is now becoming abundantly clear from one day to the next.

Israel has the duty to unequivocally abide by the international will in conformity with international law and the relevant Security Council resolutions. That is the only guarantee for a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region. Our sole objective is to secure peace and prosperity. Lebanon, which has endured a 16 year war that ended only four years ago, aspires to reconstruct its State, hopes to ensure a better future to its coming generations and this will never be unless peace in our region is just, comprehensive and lasting in conformity with international law, the United Nations Charter and resolutions.

Mr. Yañez-Barnuevo (Spain) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the European Union. Bulgaria, Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania and Slovakia also subscribe to the content of this statement.

It is impossible to begin this statement without mentioning the assassination of the Prime Minister of Israel, Yitzhak Rabin. The intolerance of the enemies of peace has taken the life of one of the main champions of the peace process begun in Madrid in 1991. Nevertheless, we must not let this despicable act disturb the dynamics of dialogue between the parties. To the contrary, it should serve as a catalyst to continue down the path already undertaken.

This past year has been crucial to the future of the Middle East and has demonstrated that the peace process in the region is now irreversible. The signing of the Treaty of Peace between Israel and Jordan on 26 October of last year has opened the way to the normalization of relations between the two States.

Moreover, the historic Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, signed on 28 September 1995 and witnessed by the European Union, has already produced its first visible results with the withdrawal of the Israeli forces from Jenin and their replacement by the autonomous Palestinian Police. It is essential that any progress achieved in the negotiations be reflected in results on the ground; we hope, in particular, that redeployment will continue in accordance with the Interim Agreement. The holding of Palestinian elections should lay the foundations for democratic government and respect for human rights in the autonomous areas. The European Union would like to pay tribute to the efforts undertaken by the parties to reach a comprehensive, just and lasting peace, despite the difficulties encountered.

The support and participation of the European Union in the peace process have been constant and unconditional. wish to recall, in this regard, that the President of the Spanish Government, as President of the European Council, undertook a tour of the region last September, in accordance with the mandate conferred at Cannes by the European Council. This visit to Israel, Gaza, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, constituted a new expression of the commitment of the European Union to the peace process, and served to examine the situation on the ground and to reaffirm to the parties our willingness to assist them in their efforts, if they consider it necessary.

The European Union hopes that the parties will continue to work in a constructive spirit, and we encourage them to continue the dialogue. We welcomed the resumption of the negotiations between Israel and Syria last June, and today we would like to call upon them and Lebanon to restore the momentum for the respective bilateral negotiations and reach an agreement on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) that would lead to the signing of a peace treaty. We reaffirm, in particular, our commitment to Security Council resolution 425 as the basis for the settlement of the Lebanese question.

In order for the peace process to be successful it is essential that political negotiation be accompanied by economic and social progress and a reduction in the disparities between the peoples of the region.

Throughout the years, the European Union has established an institutional framework of cooperation with the majority of the States of the Near and Middle East, by means of bilateral agreements of association or cooperation.

We are at present in the process of renewing and strengthening a large part of these agreements with the ultimate aim of increasing both our political and economic cooperation with our partners.

In the multilateral negotiating framework of the peace process, the European Union continues to preside over the Regional Economic Development Group and to participate in the organization of three other working groups. We have prompted the establishment of a follow-up committee which we co-chair with one of the regional interlocutors, and we intend to continue encouraging the parties to assume greater responsibility in contributing to the economic development of the region as a whole.

The European Union actively participated in the recent Middle East/North Africa Economic Summit at Amman. Private sector participation is vital to the economic development of the region. The living conditions of all the region's inhabitants must be improved and new prospects for a peaceful future need to be provided. We were particularly pleased to see that every participant at the Summit expressed firm support for the Middle East peace process and stressed the importance of reaching a comprehensive and lasting peace.

The European Union is fully convinced that peace in the Middle East is feasible. The results achieved so far in the peace process lead us to take an optimistic view of future negotiations, which should bring a comprehensive, just and definitive peace to a region that has already known too much suffering. We have confidence in the parties and their willingness to continue, despite the intolerance of the enemies of peace, along the road that will guarantee the well-being of all peoples of the Middle East and strengthen hopes for peaceful coexistence for future generations.

Mr. Skrypko (Belarus) (*interpretation from Russian*): The fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, which the world community is celebrating this year, is taking place against a background of significant progress in a Middle East peace settlement. Two months ago, on 28 September 1995, Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization signed a bilateral Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In so doing, they confirmed the irreversibility of the peace process in the Middle East which began with the Peace Conference on the Middle East at Madrid in 1991 and their determination to support, develop and strengthen that process. The delegation of the Republic of Belarus feels that the document is an important starting point for the second phase in the implementation of the historic Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements and we look forward to a successful conclusion.

The September Agreement is an example of a balanced and constructive approach to resolving the acute problems that built up during the period of confrontation. Not only will they provide for a broader field of action for Palestinian self-government in the West Bank through a gradual transfer of civil powers and responsibilities to the Palestinian Interim Self-Government Authority, as agreed, but also respond to the vital interests, including security aspects, of all participants in the peace settlement.

We consider that the parties should focus, at this stage, on the scrupulous implementation of the provisions of that Agreement and make every effort to stick to the appointed timetable for the redeployment of Israeli armed forces on the West Bank and the subsequent holding of the first democratic elections to the Palestinian Council in January 1996. We can say without fear of exaggeration that this moment in the history of the region is a test of the durability of the basis for a comprehensive peace settlement.

Overall, the delegation of Belarus believes that the unravelling of the tightly interwoven complex of problems in the Middle East should be based on the format of the Madrid Peace Conference and the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), in the context of respect for the right of all States in the region to live in peace within internationally recognized borders.

The recent villainous murder of one of the main architects of the Middle East peace process, Prime Minister of Israel Yitzhak Rabin, tragically confirmed the presence in that region of significant political forces that will stop at nothing to see the collapse of the Middle East peace process. Therefore, priority should be given to the efforts of the interested parties in the decisive struggle against outbursts of violence and of domestic and international terrorism, which is one of the main obstacles to a long-term settlement. Our delegation notes with satisfaction the clear mechanism laid down in the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip for bilateral cooperation in this field.

Constant attention must also be paid to the question of strengthening of measures to build mutual confidence. As we see it, a gradual and permanent expansion of contacts, primarily in the economic field and in environmental protection, scientific research, the transfer of technology, culture, education and tourism, could also bring about substantial changes in the qualitative content of the political dialogue. Here, we must strive to maintain the constant dynamism of bilateral links at all levels, from the highest State level down to the level of "popular diplomacy".

Of extreme significance in strengthening the success already achieved is support provided by the United Nations and the international community for the efforts of the Arab people of Palestine to organize their daily lives. In this context, our delegation notes with satisfaction the significant activity of major donor countries and of the international financial organizations, primarily the World Bank, to provide scientific, expert and technological assistance to the Palestinian people to tackle tasks related to the need to improve their social and economic conditions rapidly, strengthen institutions of self-government, establish a financial and banking system, and train highly qualified national personnel. The Republic of Belarus supports the activities of the United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories in collaboration with the relevant United Nations organs, including the United Nations Development Programme

(UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). They continue, within available resources, to make every effort to provide effective assistance to the Palestinians in their respective spheres of competence.

Our delegation considers it necessary once again to affirm its conviction that peace in the Middle East will be durable only if all the States formerly involved in the conflict in the region contribute to its achievement. In this context, against the backdrop of continuing fruitful Israeli-Palestinian dialogue, we note with satisfaction something which is perhaps no less significant, namely the breakthrough in bilateral relations between Israel and Jordan expressed in the signing on 26 October 1994 of the Treaty of Peace. As the year since that historic moment has shown, the parties have succeeded not only in eliminating the situation of confrontation, but also in securing significant progress towards the establishment of genuine good-neighbourly relations and mutually beneficial cooperation.

The Republic of Belarus also hopes that Israel and Syria will soon reach a mutual understanding at their bilateral talks, bring their positions significantly closer together and find an acceptable basis for a peace settlement.

It is also very important to achieve progress on the issue of Lebanon. Our delegation urges the resumption of direct talks between the parties in order to seek common ground on territorial questions and conditions for ensuring mutual security. The framework for these talks should be based on Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

Effective economic cooperation between the countries of the Middle East can be called, without fear of exaggeration, a main component of lasting peace and an essential condition for the development of mutually beneficial and harmonious bilateral and multilateral dialogue. Similarly, support should be given to the many regional initiatives to establish free-trade zones, industrial parks and specific joint projects in the areas of finance, transportation, energy, agriculture and tourism. Unhindered movement of manpower, capital, goods and services and the reallocation of considerable amounts of resources from military to peaceful purposes will make it easier to attract foreign investment and will contribute to the economic revitalization of the region.

Our delegation welcomes the institutionalization of dialogue on strengthening regional economic cooperation between the States of the Middle East and North Africa through the convening of annual economic summits. We also note with satisfaction that the participants in the second Middle East/North Africa Economic Summit, held last month in Amman, Jordan, came out in favour of further measures to lift the economic blockade against Israel.

Four years have elapsed since the Madrid Peace Conference that initiated the process towards a settlement in the Middle East. Four years is a brief time, but in that time the nature of relations between Israel and its Arab neighbours has changed radically. Through direct talks, sound compromises and lessening tensions, an entire region has left behind an era of military confrontation and is moving towards one of peace and development. Today, all parties to the conflict, with the support of the world community, particularly the United Nations, should make the utmost effort to realize finally the 50-year-old dream of peace and prosperity in the Middle East.

Mr. Amorim (Brazil): The Brazilian Government has been closely following recent developments in the Middle East. We are confident that the encouraging results achieved so far will gradually prevail, creating the conditions for a new era of peace and prosperity for all in the entire region. The brutal assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has cast a shadow over the hopes of all those who have sided with peace and tolerance. But the courage and leadership displayed by men like Rabin will remain a source of inspiration to peoples and Governments on all sides to persevere in their efforts to settle differences through peaceful means. Such cowardly acts of violence and all other forms of extremist opposition to the peace process must continue to be met with the harshest international condemnation.

As a multi-ethnic nation, Brazil is honoured to have citizens of both Jewish and Arab descent living together in peace, elevating the country as an example of a highly cohesive society where harmony prevails in diversity.

We wish to restate our full support for the continuation of the negotiations, which, we are convinced, will lead to the building of a permanent peace in the Middle East through a fair, comprehensive and long-lasting negotiated solution, in accordance with the provisions of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

The convening of the Peace Conference on the Middle East at Madrid in October 1991 was the first step towards the achievement of a negotiated peace in the region. We applauded the signing by the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, in Washington on 13 September 1993; of the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area, at Cairo on 4 May 1994; of the Agreement on the Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities, in August 1994; and of the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip, on 28 September 1995. As a consequence of these historic acts, we have witnessed the constitution of the Palestinian Authority, a remarkable symbol of progress for the Palestinian people in its struggle for the full exercise of its legitimate right to self-determination.

With reference to the Israeli-Jordanian segment of the peace process, my delegation once more commends the two Governments for the significant progress already achieved. The Brazilian delegation wishes to recall the importance of the signing of the Agreement between Israel and Jordan on the Common Agenda in Washington on 14 September 1993, which created a favourable atmosphere for further significant developments, such as the adoption of the Washington Declaration on 25 July 1994 and the signing of the Treaty of Peace on 26 October 1994, which I myself, in my former capacity as Brazil's Minister of External Relations, had the honour to witness. We wish to express our sincere hope that Israel and Jordan will continue to cooperate in a constructive fashion, enhancing the present positive prospects for negotiations in the region.

It is the earnest wish of the Brazilian delegation that similar progress may be attained between Israel and Syria. We wish to stress our serious concern with regard to the situation in Lebanon and reaffirm our commitment to the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Lebanon within its internationally recognized borders, as stated in Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

Over the years, the United Nations has played an important role in the Middle East, not only through peace-keeping operations and other important diplomatic initiatives, but also through economic, social and humanitarian-assistance programmes. We wish to stress the permanent responsibility of the United Nations with respect to the settlement of the situation in the region. The Brazilian delegation wishes to reaffirm its full support for the continuing participation of the United Nations in the multilateral negotiations between the Israeli and Arab parties.

My delegation also wishes to underline the importance of ensuring economic development in the occupied territories as an indispensable tool for the full implementation of the Declaration of Principles. The Brazilian delegation is confident that the strengthening of economic relations between the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli Government is absolutely necessary for the creation of a constructive environment between the two sides.

The Palestinian Authority is facing serious challenges because of the gradual transfer of responsibilities to its competence. In this regard, we commend the Palestinian Authority for the large-scale efforts it has undertaken to build a national economy, reconstruct vital infrastructure, establish national institutions and achieve overall economic and social development. However, it is our view that, together with the measures carried out by the Authority, the support of the international community is of paramount importance in order to maintain the momentum of the peace process.

Brazil's readiness to contribute to these efforts has already found expression in concrete initiatives, such as the organization of technical-cooperation missions to the region, Gaza in particular. My delegation notes with satisfaction the convening of a donor's conference in Washington and of the Economic Summits in Casablanca and Amman as significant events in which Brazil had the privilege of participating.

A word of acknowledgement is also due to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East for its important role. I wish to praise the Agency for its monitoring of the Peace Implementation Programme, which is helping create a positive environment to enhance the peace process through the economic recovery of the occupied territories.

Fully aware of the importance of the peace process and of the need for supportive participation on the part of the international community, the Brazilian Government will continue to pay close attention to the development of the situation in the Middle East. In this spirit, my country hosted the United Nations Regional Seminar and NGO Symposium on the question of Palestine for Latin America and the Caribbean from 20 to 23 March 1995 in Rio de Janeiro. Bearing in mind the vital role of economic rehabilitation as an integral part of the peace process, the Government of Brazil has actively participated, as noted earlier, in the Middle East/North

Africa Economic Summits. We also wish to reaffirm our willingness to participate in international efforts, particularly those supported by the United Nations in the fields of technical and scientific cooperation.

The negotiations that lie ahead and the difficult choices they imply will require patience and a genuine spirit of compromise on the part of the parties involved, as well as the unflinching commitment of the international community to the peace process.

Mr. Kovanda (Czech Republic): Allow me, at the outset, to join other representatives in praising the memory of Yitzhak Rabin. Mr. Rabin was a friend of my country, and his last meeting, in New York, with its President, Václav Havel, is something about which I shall talk to my grandchildren.

In September 1993, when representatives of Israel and of the Palestine Liberation Organization met in Washington to sign the Declaration of Principles, the Middle East seemed ready to follow a course towards peace in the coming months, in line with the time-frame of the Declaration. In the event, the course turned out to be full of brambles and boulders. But, given the history of the region, the marvel is that the peace process did continue, not that it did not meet its self-imposed schedule.

The progress has been obvious. The parties have established expanding Palestinian self-rule in Gaza and in the West Bank. They have settled urgent security problems and created conditions for elections to the Palestinian Authority. An Israeli-Jordanian Treaty of Peace has been signed, and its provisions are being successfully implemented.

The Czech Republic welcomes this progress. We have throughout supported the peace process and any talks on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

To be durable and successful, any Middle East settlement has to have a tangible effect on the daily life of the local people. Economic development and reconstruction — above all, in the autonomous Palestinian territories — is therefore an indispensable part of the peace process. Old conflicts will not, of course, simply dissolve in economic prosperity. Nevertheless, without positive economic and social effects, peace will hardly take root.

Many countries are therefore endeavouring to promote comprehensive economic development in the Middle East and in northern Africa. The 1994 Casablanca Summit outlined trends in regional economic integration, private investment and the establishment of regional economic institutions. The recent Amman conference, which followed up on Casablanca, elaborated these ideas and triggered concrete development projects.

In this context, we wish to commend the activity of the five working groups on multilateral talks on the Middle East. They are very important as a vehicle for preparing and implementing concrete projects in the region and as a forum for nurturing mutual contacts and cooperation between erstwhile adversaries. In September 1995, the Czech Republic was admitted as a member of the groups for water resources and for regional economic development. Our membership will allow us to intensify our participation in the development and reconstruction of the region. We hope that the experience of our experts and companies, based on their long-standing business connections in a number of Middle East countries, will prove its worth.

So far, the Czech Republic has sought to assist by contributing — as, in fact, we did just yesterday at the pledging conference — to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) fund. Furthermore, we grant scholarships to Palestinian students. Earlier this year, the Czech Government authorized development aid to the autonomous territories. The concrete form and methods of financing are being considered.

Economic prosperity is not a universal medicine; the functioning of human communities is more complex. Nevertheless, there is no doubt but that economic crises — that is, the lack of economic prosperity — constitute one breeding ground for extremism. Economic growth in the Middle East is therefore an important tool for thwarting extremist and radical tendencies. We condemn such tendencies and strongly oppose the violent acts of extremists, often targeted at civilians.

Even as we welcome the Israeli-Palestinian and the Israeli-Jordanian settlements, we hope that all other necessary bilateral negotiations will begin and will produce tangible positive results. We are convinced, for example, that the peace process will eventually alleviate the incessant tensions troubling southern Lebanon and will restore Lebanese sovereignty over its entire territory, in accordance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

Unlike the Middle East peace process, the situation in Iraq offers only scant encouragement. Over the past two years we have carefully and responsibly studied the situation as Security Council members. Although from time to time we thought that we had registered positive signals from Iraq, the overall view is today far from satisfactory.

Despite partial steps taken by Iraq, we are still awaiting its compliance with relevant Security Council resolutions, especially resolutions 687 (1991) and 715 (1991). We found Iraq's own recent admissions regarding its programmes of arms of mass destruction very disturbing. They proved that the work of the United Nations Special Commission is nowhere near its end.

We also continue to be concerned about the fate of Kuwaiti and other nationals abducted and detained in Iraq, and we have not ignored the issue of restitution of stolen Kuwaiti properties.

In connection with Iraq, one hears expressions of concern, even in today's newspaper, over the plight of people resulting, allegedly, from the imposition of sanctions. We are not going to compare the suffering of those people with that which Iraqi leaders had in store for mankind, in the form of heinous biological, chemical and other weapons of mass destruction. We do, however, wish to urge Iraqi leaders once again, as we have repeatedly done in the Security Council, to take a second look, and a third look, at Security Council resolution 986 (1995), which provides ample mechanisms to feed the hungry and minister to the sick — if only Iraqi authorities were prepared to take up the opportunity.

Mr. Butler (Australia): The Assembly takes up its agenda item on the situation in the Middle East at a critical time for the Middle East peace process. The succession of historic agreements, which began with the signing of the Declaration of Principles by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in Washington on 13 September 1993 and which was added to most recently by the signing on 28 September 1995 of the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza, has laid the foundation for a comprehensive settlement to a dispute that has for so long bitterly divided Israel and its Arab neighbours and deprived the people of the region of peace, security and prosperity.

We applaud the progress which has been made to date, the vision of those responsible for taking the hard decisions and the untiring efforts of those who have played crucial roles to bridge negotiating differences.

It has taken great courage to pursue the peace process. One individual who possessed such courage was the late Prime Minister of Israel, Mr. Yitzhak Rabin. The tragic assassination of Mr. Rabin robbed us of a great man, a man who was committed to the peace process. We must not now allow extremism and intolerance to rob the parties of the courage to secure a durable peace in the Middle East.

Like other responsible countries, Australia has a deep interest in the Middle East and has been concerned for many years at the implications for global security of conflict in the region. Australia's long-standing policy in this area is based on two main premises: a total commitment to Israel's right to exist within secure and recognized boundaries and recognition of the right of self-determination of the Palestinian people, including their right, if they so choose, to the possibility of an independent State.

Australia has supported a comprehensive solution to the Middle East dispute based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which call for Israel's withdrawal from territories occupied during the 1967 war and respect for and acknowledgment of the sovereignty of all States in the region and their right to live in peace within secure boundaries.

While a series of important steps have recently been taken on the road to a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, we cannot become complacent about the remainder of the journey.

The challenge the international community now faces is threefold: to ensure that recent positive developments do not founder for lack of economic and political support, to nurture progress on the other bilateral tracks of negotiations to match that achieved between Israel and the PLO and to prevent acts of violence and terrorism by extremist groups that seek to endanger the peace process and threaten to drive the Middle East back into conflict and suffering.

Political achievements must be reinforced by the realization of economic benefits. Thus, it is imperative not only that the parties to the agreements maintain their commitment and expedite the remaining processes of negotiation and implementation, particularly on the commencement of the final-status negotiations next year, but also that the international community ensure speedy and constant economic and political support for this purpose.

In recognition of the importance of providing international economic support and practical assistance to the Palestinian Authority, Australia has committed more than $A18 million dollars in connection with the implementation of the Oslo accords. These funds are being spent principally on development activities crucial to the Palestinian people, such as income generation, education and training, health, sanitation and water resources.

Australia has been pleased to participate in the multilateral arm of the peace process. We are particularly committed to involvement in the working groups on arms control and regional security and on water resources. These are both areas where Australia has demonstrated experience and expertise and where we judge we will be able to make a contribution to the future stability and prosperity of the region.

For example, in April 1995 Australia hosted a workshop on rainfall enhancement. This workshop provided regional water managers and scientists with an opportunity to discuss the potential for cloud seeding to enhance water availability in the countries of the Middle East. Australia has also provided practical input to the regional working group on arms control and regional security, in particular ideas relating to the establishment and operation of regional conflict-prevention centres.

We also warmly welcomed the convening of the Middle East/North Africa Summit on Economic Cooperation in Casablanca and the follow-up Summit recently convened in Amman as a way of building economic cooperation and regional development in the Middle East.

Recent developments reinforce the need for Israel, Syria and Lebanon to continue progress towards their own peace agreements. Australia warmly welcomed the Treaty of Peace between Jordan and Israel, signed last year, as a significant commitment to securing peace for the peoples of the Middle East, and we urge Israel, Syria and Lebanon to redouble their efforts to achieve a peace settlement based on the widely accepted principle of land for peace.

We continue to oppose any activity by outside forces that compromises Lebanon's sovereignty. We unequivocally maintain our support for the early implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

Australia believes that further progress in the negotiations will benefit from all parties' adopting positive and forward-looking policies that serve to build confidence and nurture an atmosphere of cooperation. Now is not the time to maintain obdurate policies of the past that can only obstruct cooperation and hinder peace.

We therefore consider that the Arab economic boycott of Israel, a symbol of Arab hostility to Israel, has no place as a negotiating point in the peace process. We believe the boycott unnecessarily constrains the economic development of the region and, in particular, may restrict the development of the Palestinian Authority. Australia welcomes the moves by a number of Arab States to wind back the boycott and urges all members of the Arab League to pursue this path as a practical and concrete step towards peace and towards consolidating the agreements already achieved.

Australia will continue to encourage all States of the region to work constructively towards the objective of achieving a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. The achievement of that objective would provide an important basis for the enhancement of regional security. We urge all Middle East States which have not yet done so to adhere to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, particularly those which operate unsafeguarded nuclear facilities, and we urge all parties to that Treaty to abide strictly by their non-proliferation obligations.

Similarly, universal adherence by States to the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention is essential and would make an important contribution to the security of the region.

Mr. Odlum (Saint Lucia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Australia continues to support fully the action taken by the Security Council on Iraq, including the investigation and monitoring of Iraqi weapons programmes. We welcome Iraq's recent declaration that it intends to cooperate with the Special Commission, and we look forward to this being given practical application. Responsibility for the welfare of the Iraqi people rests ultimately with the Iraqi Government, so Australia again urges the Government of Iraq to cooperate with the Security Council in implementing those resolutions which would allow it to resume limited oil exports so that the hardships that are evident amongst the civilian population can be addressed.

The situation in the Middle East has been a major preoccupation of this Assembly almost since the birth of the United Nations. At times, it has seemed the most acute and intractable of the regional conflicts threatening international peace and security. It is appropriate and heartening that as the United Nations celebrates it fiftieth year a peace process is in train, a peace process which, with international support, good faith and political will on the part of those directly involved, will allow us to contemplate a new environment in the Middle East, an environment in which Arabs and Israelis can live together in peace, cooperation and well-being.

Mr. Cissé (Senegal) (*interpretation from French*): The dynamic of peace and reconciliation that began in 1991 with the onset of the Middle East peace process has continued in recent years to grow stronger through the mobilization of increasing support by all, within the region and throughout the world, who are convinced that the only promising route lies in the search for a negotiated solution. The noble enterprise of building a just and lasting peace on which Palestinian and Israeli leaders embarked when they met at Washington on 13 September 1993 to sign the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, including its annexes and the subsequent memorandum of understanding, needs this broad support, because it must avoid the numerous obstacles and traps set by extremists of all stripes, who are determined to thwart peace.

It was thus that on 4 November 1995 one of the main initiators and architects of the peace process, Yitzhak Rabin, Prime Minister of Israel, was cut down, a tragic victim to the blindness and violence bred of intolerance and hatred. It is fortunate indeed that this ordeal, as hard as it may be, has thus far only strengthened the determination of Israeli and Palestinian leaders, and of the vast majority which favours peace and supports them, to pursue progress in the implementation of the agreements.

To be sure, the road ahead is long. But the 28 September signing at Washington of the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip marked the successful conclusion of a year of difficult negotiations and confirmed the determination of the parties to persevere and continue to move forward.

Like the rest of the international community, Senegal fully supports that agreement, as it supported earlier ones. We hope it will be another milestone on the road towards the full exercise by the Palestinian people of their right to self-determination and to sovereignty in their homeland, and will thus contribute to the establishment of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

The emphasis on the question of Palestine derives from the unanimous conviction that it lies at the heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict and that only if it is settled in all its aspects on the basis of the principles set out in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) will it be possible to lay the foundations for true peace in the Middle East.

Negotiations between the parties will soon enter a crucial phase in settling sensitive problems of permanent status, and we think it important that the peace process go hand in hand with renewed support from the international community, especially from the United Nations, which continues to bear responsibility until the Palestinian people achieve the restoration of their legitimate national rights. In that connection, the international community must continue and increase its support for all in the region who have chosen the difficult road of peace, and must reflect that support in concrete action that will enable the immense majority, which aspires to peace, to hope for a better tomorrow.

With specific regard to the Palestinian population of the occupied territories, whose commitment and support are indispensable for the success of the peace process, the international community's support in their task of rebuilding the economic and social infrastructure is one of the most important pillars of peace in the Middle East. In this connection we welcome the efforts of the Secretary-General and the United Nations Special Coordinator in the occupied territories to coordinate assistance to the Palestinian people and support for economic and social development in the region.

The new climate in Israeli-Palestinian relations has begun to have its positive effects, inspiring a dynamic that has enabled Israel and Jordan to establish formal diplomatic relations and Syria and Israel to hold several sessions of talks on substantive issues. We hope that progress will be rapid in the negotiations between Syria and Israel and that talks between Lebanon and Israel will get under way, in the spirit of the 1989 Taif agreement and Security Council resolution 425 (1978), with a view to broadening and consolidating the basis for the peace that is a prerequisite for strengthening cooperation and for developing the rich economic potential of the region. In this regard, the second North Africa-Middle East summit meeting, held in October at Amman, Jordan, showed that peace has returned to that region and that a prosperous future is in the offing.

I shall conclude by quoting from the message of His Excellency Mr. Abdou Diouf, President of the Republic of Senegal, on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People:

> "With every passing day, the spectre of war and destruction retreats further from Palestine. It is up to all of us together to work tirelessly for the triumph in Palestine and throughout the Middle East of the ideals of peace, justice and solidarity that inspire the courageous leaders of the region, who have chosen to wage the noble struggle for peace".

Mr. Ni'mah (Qatar): For a considerable time now, the United Nations General Assembly has made a practice of discussing the situation in the Middle East, year in and year out. This, of course, has been due to the General Assembly's awareness of the importance of this vital region to the consolidation of international peace. The questions arising from the conflict in the Middle East have been the focus of a large number of the strenuous efforts deployed by the international community in trying to find viable solutions to the problems of that conflict and to contain the repercussions of the resultant disputes and the flames of successive wars.

If we examine the history of the Middle East region, we find it to be a history fraught with momentous events — events that arose out of various reasons and under various circumstances. Some of them were momentous events which mobilized feelings, only to metamorphose after a while into a continuous concern. Other such events shook swords in their sheaths in anticipation of a perceived day of reckoning. Such a day, at times, becomes a pitch black night in which the traveller yearns for dawn, and, at times, becomes a compassionate, invisible hand that reaches down from heaven, and lightening, in which one descends, a break in the clouds for a Middle East that struggles with its destiny, to be beaten at times and at times to be gripped by various states of despair and hopelessness, in which it — that is, the Middle East — remains upright, unvanquished and patient, with its infinite hopes, dreams and visions. These hopes, dreams and visions have been spent on the principles of the United Nations Charter, a Charter which was designed by mankind to be a covenant of peace, conciliation, rapprochement, dialogue and solidarity among mankind in all its races, and among the cultures and civilizations of the entire world. It is a Charter that humanity looked up to for justice in its tribulations and relied upon to be the bedrock of righteousness, justice and peace. We also wanted it to be an end to the age of wars, a breakthrough into the time of peace, with its norms regarding the sovereignty and independence of countries, its standards for the protection of territories and their reconstruction and its concepts of preserving the options of peoples regarding their ways of living and adopting their political and socio-economic systems. Such diversity provides the foundation for interaction among nations in solving problems and conflicts through constructive dialogue, consultation, cooperation and coordination.

When the Conference on the Middle East was held in Madrid, we saw a door that augured a new dawn of *détente* in the history of our region, putting an end to the suffering of the masses of Palestinian, Lebanese and Syrian peoples afflicted with Israeli occupation. This gave rise in our hearts to hope that praiseworthy international efforts expended since that Conference would be able to put an end to the tragedy of the Palestinian people and would help it to regain its legitimate right to the establishment of its independent state on the soil of its dear Palestinian homeland.

The dawn of this new era, reflected in the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements in Gaza and Jericho in 1993, the Cairo Agreement of 1994, the agreement between Jordan and Israel, and, finally, the agreement signed in Washington on 28 September 1995, renew our hopes that the process of peace in the Middle East will arrive at its safe haven, and our hopes that this process will continue its vigorous march in order to achieve the aims desired in the Lebanese and Syrian tracks, and to achieve a settlement which is comprehensive and just to all outstanding problems, so that a just and lasting peace can be achieved on the basis of mutual respect, fruitful cooperation and the desired coordination, in order to uphold the interests of all the peoples of the region and to achieve their ambitions.

The expansion of the self-government on the West Bank to include the area of Jenin, the plan for it to include Nablus — the major city on the West Bank — and later to include all other territories under occupation, is of itself a positive development which renews our hopes in the establishment of a Middle East yearning for prosperity, advancement and growing progress in the fields of human endeavour and in the realms of cultural competition — in arts, letters, science and knowledge.

The dawn of this new era, embodied in the launching of the process of peace and cooperation in this important region of the world, has placed great responsibility on its makers and guarantors, and has added other burdens during this important transitional stage of the peace process. The continuity of this process and its progress towards the desired aims should not be taken for granted, but should instead be seen as something calling for the deployment of more efforts by all parties concerned and their mobilization of greater energy to promote negotiation towards greater and more comprehensive ends.

Our hopes are great, and our expectations are even greater, as a result of the wide global support enjoyed by the peace process, and by the support of those who believe in peace — those who now have even greater hopes regarding the regaining of the occupied territories and regaining usurped rights, putting an end to war and initiating a new era of regional cooperation in order to put an end to armaments and to achieve economic development for all States of the region and to upgrade the level of the peoples of the region, who have long suffered the wars and problems of occupation.

The aspiration after actual peace is linked to laying the foundations for mutual confidence amongst the parties concerned. Such mutual confidence cannot enjoy the fruitful cooperation and the exchanges in the growing socio-economic and political relations among the parties until the full withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories and the renunciation of the ideas of hegemony and supremacy, as well as by the steering away from acts of confrontation and violence, the casting away of patterns of extremism and intolerance, the acquisition of territories by force and the continued attempt to occupy these territories as a basis for security.

The State of Qatar, proceeding from the sagacious instructions of His Highness Sheik Hamad bin-Khalifa Al-Thani, seeks all that would serve the national aims and would provide the necessary means to uphold the national Arab right to achieve a full comprehensive and just peace in the Middle East. Such a peace would strengthen peace and security in the region and ensure its stability.

Qatar sincerely seeks to mobilize all the necessary Pan-Arab energies so that they may contribute to the unification and coordination of the efforts in this delicate, significant stage in the history of our nation which calls for more Arab solidarity and more Pan-Arab brotherhood which would enable our Arab nation to play its distinct and typical role in the history of humanity and its pioneering creative contribution to the realms of cultural development.

Furthermore, the State of Qatar, through its continuous support for the Gulf Cooperation Council and the strengthening of the links of brotherhood and fruitful cooperation, through enlightened consultation and the exchange of the right concepts and of skilful participation in laying the foundations in the interests of progress and the welfare of the peoples of the region now and in the future and in protecting their lands, their dependants and the territorial integrity of all countries of the Gulf region without exception.

This policy affirms the principles of regional cooperation and strengthens the concept of good neighbourliness, mutual respect and commitment to the principles of international law and the United Nations Charter and lay the foundations for mutual understanding based on commitment to the values of continuous exchanges of joint vital interests. This would lead to the establishment of domestic social peace and stability and would contribute to strengthening security under international as well as Islamic national and regional standards. In particular, it would contribute to the achievement of the aims of the peace process in the Middle East to which Qatar has, and continues to make, a praiseworthy and well-known contribution reflected in its having hosted the fifth meeting of the Working Group on Arms Control and Regional Security in the Middle East in 1994. It was also reflected in its participation in the conferences and meetings regarding the peace process and related questions on socio-economic development and as a further contribution to the promotion of the peace process we will host the Fourth Summit of Regional Economic Cooperation. Qatar's contribution is a living expression of an enlightened awareness that the concept of peace based on a just, comprehensive and lasting foundation and on the principle of land for peace and on the implementation of relevant international resolutions — Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) which call for ending the Israeli occupation of the Syrian-Arab Golan and ending the Israeli occupation of South Lebanon which has been afflicted with wars and suffering as a result of that bitter occupation. We call on the international community to put an end to that situation so as to return southern Lebanon to its motherland in dignity. History records the suffering of Lebanon and records its pain. Its civilization gave the Middle East the world's greatest treasures and the greatest alphabet where we read of beauty and goodness as well as beautiful words which form the melodious tunes in our world. This is reflected in its generous bounty, its grains of goodness and in its grapes and olives, a sustenance for mankind.

The international community is called upon to return southern Lebanon to Lebanon. We would also like to reaffirm our full and complete support for fraternal Lebanon, for its sovereignty over all its territories and its regional security. We commend the efforts made by the brotherly people of Lebanon towards the reconstruction its country. We are pleased to note the participation of our Arab brethren in its reconstruction so that Lebanon may regain its place as a beacon of light — one which gives an example of tolerance, love, development and prosperity.

We look forward to further achievements in the peace process and to progress in the endeavours now being made on the Lebanese and Syrian tracks of the peace negotiations. We call upon all peace-loving forces to contribute to the achievement of progress on these two tracks. In particular, we call upon the United States, the sponsor of the peace process in the Middle East, to continue its praiseworthy efforts in this regard in order to bring the process to a successful conclusion that would be reflected in the establishment of full justice, security, stability and permanent peace in the Middle East.

The stability of the Middle East economically and politically is intimately linked with an important question, namely curbing the arms race in the region. Therefore, we call for more concerted efforts by the international community to halt the arms race in the region which is in dire need of mobilizing its resources and potential in order to achieve the progress and prosperity it has long sought. Curbing the arms race should encompass all the countries of the region without exception.

Qatar emphasizes the need for the region to be free of weapons of mass destruction, foremost among which are nuclear weapons. In this regard we recall the resolution on the Middle East adopted by the Conference of Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) of 11 May 1995 which noted with concern the continued presence of nuclear facilities in the Middle East.

It reaffirmed the importance of achieving universal accession to the Treaty, and called upon all States of the Middle East that have not yet acceded to it to do so. It also called for those States that have not yet placed all their nuclear installations under the full safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency to do so without exception.

We believe that the efforts of peace-loving peoples will enjoy increased support and encouragement from all the Members of our international Organization, which is called upon today, more than ever before, to step up its efforts in this regard. This would help create a climate of confidence and tolerance, and would foster the will to establish a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East. This would enhance the status of the peacemakers in the negotiations and enhance the value of the significant achievements made in the peace process, in spite of the risks it faces and of the sacrifices made for its success.

This process holds out the hope of achieving a harmonious present and a brighter future for the Middle East, marked by the values of tolerance and cooperation and the enjoyment of peace and security. Hence, my delegation looks forward to the adoption without a vote of the draft resolution on the peace process in the Middle East.

Let evil know that good will defeat it, and let destruction know that the forces of reconstruction will prevail.

Mr. Zlenko (Ukraine): Ukraine welcomes the new developments in Arab-Israeli relations over the course of the past year aimed at settling the Middle East conflict by political means, with the help of a peaceful and constructive dialogue between Israel and the Arab countries.

During this period, a multilateral summit meeting was held in Cairo, with the participation of President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, King Hussein Ibn Talal of Jordan, the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin of Israel and Mr. Yasser Arafat, the head of the Palestinian Authority. In addition, a number of bilateral talks, aimed at facilitating the practical implementation of previously signed documents and the continuation of the peace dialogue, have taken place.

In this context, the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip, signed on 28 September 1995, constitutes a milestone on the road to achieving peace in this region, and particularly between the Israeli and the Palestinian peoples.

In a letter to Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and head of the Palestinian Authority, on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, Mr. Leonid Kuchma, President of Ukraine, said:

> "I wish to express the hope that the practical implementation of this document will contribute to

> the continuation of the negotiating process towards the final settlement of the problem by political means and to the establishment of lasting peace and mutual understanding in the Middle East, and will serve the cause of the Palestinian people's exercise of its right to national self-determination through the creation of an independent State of Palestine."

Ukraine welcomes the positive developments and the steps taken towards achieving a just and lasting settlement in the Middle East. The compliance by the parties with the obligations undertaken in accordance with the signed agreements and the consolidation of mutual confidence are of paramount importance.

In solving the Middle East problem, Ukraine proceeds from the need to reach a compromise between all the parties to the conflict and to implement the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and the provisions of the bilateral agreements. A comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the question of Palestine, the core of the Middle East problem, must be based on these principles.

We should pay tribute to the leaders of the PLO, Israel and Jordan for their efforts to achieve peace in the region. We would also like to commend the sponsors of the peace process and the Government of Egypt for their dedication and commitment to this task. At the same time, we resolutely condemn the manifestations of terrorism and extremism in this region. Special attention should be paid to the great danger posed by such actions on the part of the radical elements in Arab countries and in Israel alike — elements that take no consideration of the new political realities or of changes in the region and act on the basis of old stereotypes, applying terrorist methods as a means of solving the problems. In our view, terrorism and extremism have an adverse effect on the process of negotiations, jeopardize the achievements of the previous negotiations and destabilize the overall situation in the region.

The Government and the people of Ukraine learned with great sorrow and profound shock of the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. This barbaric terrorist act was aimed not only at one of the principal architects of the Middle East peace process, but also at the peace process itself. We share the hope expressed by many delegations that the people of Israel will not allow this terrible tragedy to discourage them and that they will remain committed to the peace process.

In our opinion, the United Nations should maintain its responsibility for finding a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine and promoting dialogue and confidence-building measures by creating an atmosphere conducive to the eradication of the hostility and mistrust that still divide the region.

Ukraine is also hopeful that progress will be made on the Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Lebanese tracks of the negotiations. This will undoubtedly enhance the chances of bringing about peace and stability in the region.

Ukraine pursues a balanced and constructive policy in its relations with all countries of the Middle East. As is known, all the States and peoples of the region are willing to engage in mutually beneficial economic cooperation. Our country is interested in the speediest possible settlement of the Middle East conflict and the development of relations with all countries of the region. In this regard, Ukraine, with its considerable scientific and technical potential, is ready to establish Ukrainian-Palestinian cooperation, in particular in the economic sphere.

In conclusion, I would like to express the hope of the people of Ukraine that the seeds of peace will soon take root in the ancient soil of the Middle East and that the peoples of the region will know no more war.

Mr. Shah (Pakistan): Since our last debate on this agenda item, positive and encouraging developments have taken place towards the peaceful solution of the Middle East conflict. The people of the Middle East have continued to demonstrate a serious commitment to achieving a peaceful settlement of their long-standing problems by forswearing the path of conflict and making earnest efforts towards promoting peace and understanding among themselves through dialogue.

Ever since this crisis began, the Government of Pakistan has followed with keen interest the situation in the occupied Arab territories. The recent agreements concluded between the parties involved constitute significant steps toward a just and durable peace in the Middle East. We earnestly hope that the final settlement will include the withdrawal by Israel from all the occupied Palestinian and Arab territories and, moreover, will adequately address all the aspects of the Middle East issue, including the return of the refugees.

Pakistan's persistent support of the just struggle of the Palestinian people is well known. We have consistently endorsed Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) as a basis for the resolution of the Middle East and Palestinian problems.

The question of Palestine is at the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict. It has, therefore, always been assumed that a solution to the Palestine problem would pave the way for a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East. We welcome the signing of the Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel on 28 September 1995. Pakistan fully shares the belief that the peace process, which began with the Madrid Conference in 1991, will lead to the Palestinian people's exercising their right to self-determination through the establishment of an independent homeland with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. My delegation also welcomes the fact that alongside progress on the Palestinian issue significant movement has taken place towards solving the problems between Jordan and Israel. We very much hope to see similar progress in resolving the Israeli-Syrian and the Israeli-Lebanese conflicts. In order to achieve a durable and comprehensive peace in the Middle East, it is vital that successful results be simultaneously achieved on the Lebanese and Syrian tracks. We fully share the view that unless these fundamental issues are adequately addressed peace will continue to elude the region.

It is imperative to maintain the present momentum that has been achieved in the negotiating process. We fully share the expectations of the international community that there will be no delay in the implementation of the agreements concluded so far. Furthermore, the provision of these agreements should be complied with both in letter and in spirit. We strongly urge all parties concerned to demonstrate the requisite flexibility and accommodation, as well as a sincere commitment to the vision of lasting peace in the Middle East.

My delegation would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) for its commendable work in alleviating the sufferings of the Palestinian people. We commend the selfless dedication and unwavering commitment of the Commissioner General of UNRWA and his staff, and note the progress achieved by UNRWA in the transfer of its headquarters from Vienna to the Gaza Strip.

The United Nations must continue its efforts aimed at resolving the Middle East problem. The Organization and its specialized agencies can make an invaluable contribution in extending assistance to the Palestinian people. They have a special responsibility to help build the social and economic infrastructure and national institutions that are a prerequisite for the attainment of peace and prosperity in the Middle East. In this regard, my delegation would like to extend its appreciation to the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for the most able and distinguished manner in which he has continued to guide the work of the Committee.

The crucial linkage between the political process and the social and economic dimensions of the problem cannot be ignored. This linkage is vital for the achievement of lasting stability in the region. The Middle East and North Africa Economic Summit Conferences held in Casablanca and Amman were a reflection of the resolve of the international community to assist the parties in achieving this objective. It is, therefore, of paramount importance that the international community continue its constructive contribution to the peace process and assist the parties in accomplishing their mission.

The international community is fully committed to the exercise of the right to self-determination by all peoples under colonial or other forms of alien domination and foreign occupation. The United Nations has recognized the right to self-determination of the people of Palestine and Jammu and Kashmir. Although encouraging developments have taken place towards the resolution of the question of Palestine, the right to self-determination of the people of Jammu and Kashmir has yet to be exercised through a fair and impartial plebiscite under the auspices of the United Nations. Pakistan wishes to continue to extend all possible support to the Palestinian cause in their efforts for national reconstruction. Our links with the people of the Middle East region are deep-rooted and Pakistan anxiously looks forward to further reinforcing these natural linkages of our common history. My delegation also appeals to the international community, particularly the United Nations, to provide urgent assistance to the Palestinian National Authority in its efforts to rebuild the Palestinian economy and consolidate its control over the liberated areas.

The environment for peace in the Middle East surpasses the promise of any known in the past. It is therefore essential that the region not relapse into another period of instability. The international community must seize this historic opportunity and ensure the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Mr. Park (Republic of Korea): It is with deeply mixed feelings that I stand at this rostrum today to speak about the peace process in the Middle East, which has thus far traversed a path of both great hardship and historic achievement. Like so many in the international community, the Republic of Korea has rejoiced in witnessing the seeds of peace being sown in the Middle East through the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements and this year through the implementation of an Agreement which extends Palestinian self-rule to the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Through candid and open-minded dialogue, Israelis and Palestinians have jointly proven to the world that they have the courage, fortitude and vision to establish a real peace in the Middle East.

The critical Agreement, which contains a concrete action programme for Israeli withdrawal and Palestinian self-government in certain areas, has dramatically altered the political and military landscape of the Middle East and has paved the new-found way towards peace and reconciliation. Indeed, for those of us who still vividly remember the bloodshed and violence of the wars of the 1960s and 1970s, the transfer of control over sections of the West Bank from Israeli to Palestinian hands was a poignant reminder that even the most deeply rooted and seemingly insurmountable hatreds can be extinguished by the conscious efforts of human beings.

The Israeli-Jordanian relationship has formed another critical stepping-stone towards comprehensive peace in the region. The watershed peace accord between these two countries, signed last year, has been implemented faithfully and supported by an increase in substantive bilateral cooperation. With the trade agreement signed between Jordan and Israel on 25 October 1995, the door has now been opened for even greater economic achievements, which promise to further bolster relations between them.

Despite the progress in the Middle East peace process, 1995 has also been a year of tragedy and loss. We have mourned the passing of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, an individual who never tired in his struggle to secure peace in the Middle East and whose heroic commitment and boundless faith in the prospects for peace were a central factor in propelling the Middle East peace process to this stage. His guidance and wisdom will be dearly missed not only by the people of the Middle East, but by all the peace-loving nations of the world, which found such great inspiration in his words and actions. Indeed, it is his spirit which will continue to serve as a beacon for the efforts to realize peace and prosperity in the Middle East.

The Republic of Korea welcomes the Israeli position of pursuing all the commitments for regional peace and sincerely hopes that the leaders of the region — Prime Minister Peres of Israel, King Hussein of Jordan and Chairman Arafat of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) will, in a spirit of mutual cooperation and respect, strive towards constructive solutions and advance the peace between their peoples. Since the Middle East peace process was set in motion by the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991, the Republic of Korea has consistently held the view that peace cannot be whole without reconciliation between Israel and Syria and between Israel and Lebanon. Although much remains to be done on these two tracks to round out the peace process, progress in these areas may allow the Middle East to set an example of genuine regional peace in the post-cold-war era, in which the security landscape is by and large characterized by conflicts of a local nature. It is in this context that the Republic of Korea welcomes the recent positive signs regarding the relationship between Israel and Syria and hopes that they will be forged into more concrete plans for peace.

One of the critical lessons of the post-cold-war period is that economic well-being is a precondition for peace and security. We have seen, for example, the grave implications which rampant hunger and poverty, if left unattended, can have on regional and global stability. In this vein, the Republic of Korea views the Middle East/North Africa Economic Summit as instrumental in enhancing regional economic cooperation and development since its first meeting, in Casablanca, last year. The second Summit meeting, held last month in Amman, laid the foundation for promoting the expansion of private-sector investment in the region and fostering a public-private partnership in fields such as tourism, telecommunications and transportation. The Amman Summit, in accordance with the Casablanca Declaration, also mapped out key institutional arrangements to underpin the peace process.

In my delegation's view, one of the most vital organizations is the Bank for Economic Cooperation and Development in the Middle East and North Africa, which will be headquartered in Cairo and will dedicate itself to developing the private sector in the area and supporting regional infrastructure projects. Given our view that peace in the Middle East will eventually hinge on the economic viability of the region, the Republic of Korea has decided to join the Bank as a founding member and make an initial investment of $62.5 million. We have also offered $12 million for the rehabilitation projects of the Palestinian people for the period between 1994 and 1998 and are currently considering the provision of assistance for the establishment of the Middle East desalinization centre.

Despite our geographic distance from the Middle East and certain budgetary constraints, the Government of the Republic of Korea has been trying to actively join the international efforts to build peace and prosperity in the Middle East. The reasons for the Republic of Korea's participation and assistance in the Middle East process is twofold. In a general context, we recognize the critical implications that peace in the Middle East would have for global peace and security. However, as a country which itself experienced the scourge and devastation of war 40 years ago and still suffers from the division of the Korean peninsula, the Republic of Korea also has a special interest in the Middle East peace process.

We are particularly interested in and supportive of the Israeli-Palestinian dialogue as a way for the parties directly concerned to solve their disputes. While there are numerous and daunting obstacles to overcome in the ongoing Middle East peace process, it is understood that the final-status negotiations between the two parties, scheduled for May 1996, will constitute the critical stage.

The Government of the Republic of Korea has every confidence in the wisdom and courage of Israelis and Palestinians, who have already achieved what seemed to be an impossibility just a few years ago. We continue to support their efforts to achieve success in their endeavours on the basis of the principles and spirit enshrined in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978).

My delegation takes this opportunity to reaffirm to all the Member States gathered here that the Republic of Korea, particularly in its capacity as a Security Council member starting next year, will make every possible effort to assist in securing peace and prosperity in the Middle East.

Mr. Snoussi (Morocco) (*interpretation from French*): Since the Peace Conference on the Middle East was convened at Madrid on 30 October 1991, and thanks to the ensuing bilateral and multilateral negotiations, that strategic region of the world has, to our great satisfaction, progressively entered a new era of *détente*, improved relations and reconciliation. The evolution of the peace process has been marked by largely positive results, which we wholeheartedly welcome.

The historic signings of the Declaration of Principles in Washington on 13 September 1993 by the Palestinians and Israelis, the Jordan-Israel Treaty of Peace on 26 October 1994 and other related agreements have created a dynamic of peace that has made it possible to take welcome steps towards the definitive settlement of a crisis that seemed thoroughly insoluble. We therefore fully support the peace process, which has become irreversible, and welcome the efforts of the international community — the sponsors of the peace process in particular — to free the Middle East region from the burdens of the past. The draft resolution they have submitted to us cannot but strengthen further this well-founded process. We are confident that the will and spirit of cooperation inspiring the parties will be commensurate with the challenges that lie ahead.

The signing on 28 September 1995 in Washington of the Taba Agreement on the extension of self-rule certainly marks another important stage in the settlement of the Palestinian problem. We therefore welcome its implementation in accordance with the commitments undertaken and the agreed timetables. Indeed, we are sincerely pleased to see the two parties moving firmly and resolutely ahead on the road to peace, despite the tragedies and acts of violence and provocation that have taken place in the region. We must all take action to prevent terrorists and extremists from taking the long-sought peace as their hostage and burying the hopes that have begun to dawn over the region.

It is reassuring to see that the settlement of the Palestinian problem has been the subject of sustained and ongoing efforts. We hope that the parties to the conflict will display a constructive spirit and will realize where their legitimate interests lie, in particular during the negotiation of questions still awaiting a definitive solution.

The international community must therefore act to ensure that the peace process enables the brotherly Palestinian people to enjoy all its legitimate rights, particularly the rights to self-determination and to establish an independent State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. In this connection, we wish to reaffirm that that Holy City, which is at the core of the Palestinian problem, is an integral part of the territories occupied since 1967. We are therefore opposed to any modification of the status of the Holy City until its final status has been negotiated.

In this regard, it should be stressed that the Declaration of Principles of 13 September 1993, which was welcomed with great optimism by the international community, stated that the permanent status of that city must be one of the issues negotiated in 1996 and, in article V, paragraph 4, that:

> "The two parties agree that the outcome of the permanent status negotiations should not be prejudiced or pre-empted by agreements reached for the interim period." (*A/48/486, p. 5*)

In addition, article I of the Declaration clearly states that:

> "the negotiations on the permanent status will lead to the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973)". (*ibid., p. 4*)

In this context, we also wish to recall Security Council 478 (1980), which calls on States to withdraw their diplomatic missions from Al-Quds Al-Sharif. It is obvious that one decision taken recently in this connection is in accordance neither with that resolution nor with the spirit and letter of the Declaration of Principles and is unlikely to facilitate progress in the peace process.

There can be no doubt that a lasting settlement of the Palestinian question can be based only on law, justice and equality. The credibility and success of the peace process for the entire region are at stake. In this context, allow me to pay a tribute to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and to congratulate its Chairman, Ambassador Cissé of Senegal, and the leaders of the Division for Palestinian Rights for their tireless efforts to achieve a settlement of the Palestinian question on the basis of international legality.

Respect for international legality is also a *sine qua non* for breathing new life into the Syrian-Israeli and Lebanese-Israeli peace negotiations, which, unfortunately, remain deadlocked. We therefore support any process that will result in the return of the Syrian Golan to Syria and respect for Lebanon's territorial integrity, in conformity with the relevant United Nations resolutions and out of respect for the legitimate interests of the parties concerned. Thus will the comprehensive nature of the peace be duly enshrined.

The achievement of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East region will depend on the process's achieving results based on United Nations resolutions, the rules of international law and the United Nations Charter. It is a long-term project requiring good will, patience, trust, perseverance and respect for others.

However, we cannot overemphasize the fact that political peace in the Middle East is nothing without economic peace. That is why we consider the Economic Summits held in Casablanca in 1994 and, more recently, in Amman in October 1995, to be important steps towards the establishment of an integrated peace based on trade, cooperation and economic partnership that will lay the foundations of stability, security and prosperity in the Middle East. Genuine peace must be mutually beneficial to all the peoples of the region, who most certainly aspire to a better, more dignified life and the well-being we all aspire to.

It was therefore a source of great satisfaction for us that at the Amman Summit it was decided, *inter alia*, to set up the Executive Secretariat of the Economic Summits in Morocco and to create a Bank for Economic Cooperation and Development, to be headquartered in Cairo. In this context, we call on the international community to support appropriately the commendable efforts of the Palestinian Authority for economic, social and cultural development in the occupied territories and to consolidate the institutional and socio-economic structures of the emerging Palestinian entity so that it will be able to fulfil its responsibilities in the best possible conditions.

My country, which is deeply committed to the peace process and to improving the situation in the Middle East, believes that the relationships being established between the Arab countries and Israel are a guarantee of peace and will make it possible for the Arab and Jewish peoples to come together so that they can turn the page of the past and look resolutely to a future full of promise. It is therefore essential that the international community defend the peace process, give it political, economic and moral support and encourage the parties concerned to work for a genuine peace based on mutual understanding, cooperation, security, dignity and respect for the legitimate rights of all.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this agenda item.

I should like to inform members that, to enable consultations to be completed, action on the draft resolutions submitted under this item will be taken on Monday 4 December, in the morning, as the second item of business.

One representative has indicated that he wishes to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I call on the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Hasan (Iraq) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I wish to respond to some comments in the statement of the Ambassador of the Czech Republic concerning my country. Let me summarize my reply as follows.

First, if the intentions of States towards the human race are gauged by the number of weapons they possess, the representative of the Czech Republic ought to have applied his criterion to the States that possess huge arsenals of weapons of mass destruction, particularly those States that have not hesitated to use such weapons in situations totally unrelated to the principle of legitimate self-defence. Furthermore, as the item under consideration concerned the situation in the Middle East, he ought to have referred to Israeli nuclear weapons and the threat that they pose to that region as many other States have done with regard to the threat of Israel's nuclear weapons to peace and security in the Middle East.

Secondly, the representative of the Czech Republic said that Security Council resolution 986 (1995) was adopted to relieve the human suffering of Iraqi civilians caused by the embargo. Regardless of the substance of Security Council resolution 986 (1995), that remark amounted to clear and frank recognition that the Security Council resolutions by which the embargo was imposed five years ago took no account of the human suffering of Iraqi civilians. This, in actual fact, is a clear condemnation of those resolutions as inhuman.

On the other hand, it is not accurate at all to describe that Security Council resolution 986 (1995) as humanitarian, since it includes stipulations that undermine Iraq's sovereignty and constitute interference in its internal affairs. It even imposes the condition that a particular harbour must be used to export oil, regardless of the facts of the market.

Thirdly, the representative of the Czech Republic said that Iraq's latest statements on weapons were very disturbing. We find this strange. Why is that representative so very disturbed? Does he not welcome such declarations? Do they not mean that the remaining requirements of Security Council resolutions 687 (1991) and 715 (1991) — the very resolutions for the implementation of whose provisions he called — are being abided by?

Fourthly, the representative of the Czech Republic called for the return of Kuwaiti detainees. I affirm yet again that there are no detainees. As in the case of any other war, there are missing persons. The missing persons are being searched for in cooperation with the parties concerned, under the aegis of the International Committee of the Red Cross. Progress is being made in that respect.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.